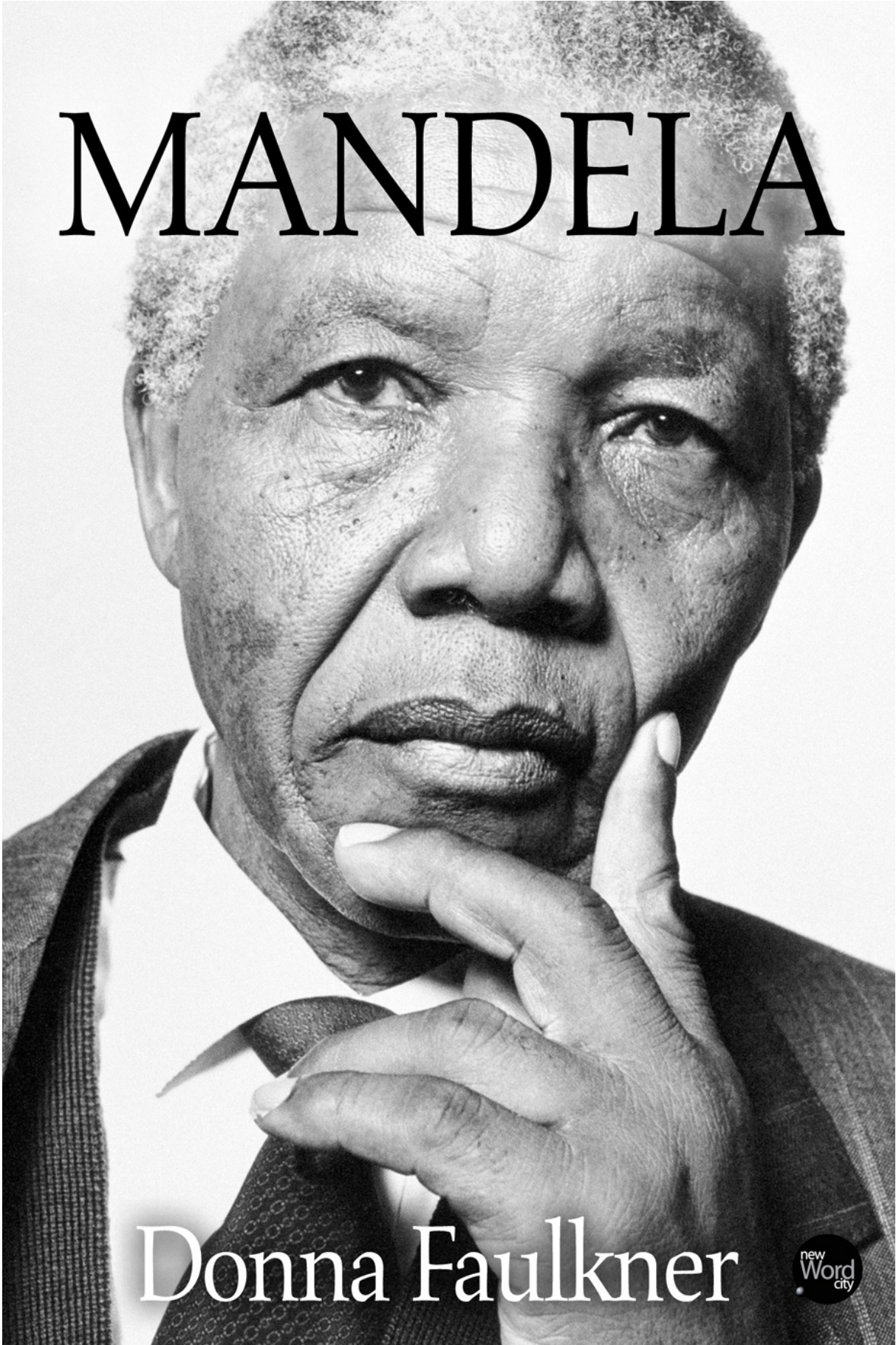


MANDELA

A black and white portrait of Nelson Mandela. He is shown from the chest up, wearing a dark suit jacket, a white shirt, and a dark tie. His right hand is raised to his chin, with his index finger pointing upwards. He has a thoughtful expression, looking slightly to the right of the camera. The background is a plain, light color.

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MANDELA

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INTRODUCTION

In the seventh year of Nelson Mandela's captivity, a notoriously brutal commander took over the prison on [Robben Island](#). By then, Mandela and his fellow inmates had softened and even befriended some of their guards. Working conditions in the lime quarry had grown less harsh, and they were allowed study privileges. South Africa's rulers concluded that the fearsome island dungeon was going soft. Colonel Piet Badenhorst was sent to whip the prisoners back into line.

Badenhorst transferred the old guards off the island and replaced them with a new lot – younger, coarser, harder. The miserable food got worse. Cells were raided, books and papers were confiscated, and many men were sent to solitary confinement. Badenhorst singled out Mandela as the chief instigator and subdued and provoked him with calculated insults as a lesson to the rest. One bitterly cold night, the prisoners were roused from sleep by a gang of drunken guards, ordered to strip, and lined up against the wall of the outside courtyard where they stood naked and shivering for an hour until one of them collapsed with chest pains. Such treatment was routine.

The prisoners fought back as best they could, filing complaints that went ignored and smuggling messages to the outside world. In a daring move, Mandela organized a delegation to confront Badenhorst. They threatened work stoppages, slowdowns, and hunger strikes if he didn't ease up. Badenhorst said he would consider what they said and ordered no reprisals. The prisoners counted that a victory.

After several months, apparently in response to the smuggled messages, three judges showed up to conduct an inspection. Mandela, as the prisoners' spokesman, met with them under Badenhorst's baleful eye. As Mandela described the beating of a non-political prisoner, the commandant wagged a finger in his face. "Be careful, Mandela," he warned. "If you talk about things you haven't seen, you will get yourself into trouble. You know what I mean."

Mandela turned to the judges. "Gentlemen, you can see for yourselves the type of man we are dealing with as commanding officer," he said calmly. "If he can threaten me here, in your presence, you can imagine what he does when you are not here." The judges agreed. Within three months, Badenhorst was transferred.

A few days before Badenhorst left, Mandela was again summoned to tell the colonel and South Africa's commissioner of prisons if the prisoners had other complaints. Mandela ran down his list. When he finished, Badenhorst spoke "like a human being and showed a side of himself we had never seen before." The commandant told Mandela he would soon be leaving and added, to Mandela's astonishment, "I just want to wish you people good luck."

Mandela thought about that for a long time. He concluded that Badenhorst wasn't evil, but merely corrupted by an inhuman system that rewarded brutality. It was a reminder, Mandela later wrote, that "All men, even the most seemingly cold-blooded, have a core of decency, and that if their hearts are touched, they are capable of changing."

Mandela's experiences and his thoughtful conclusion go a long way toward explaining his near-miraculous success in leading the liberation of his people, ending the vicious system of [apartheid](#), and ultimately reconciling black South Africans with their white oppressors. With his tenacity, his courage and coolness, he confronted power with no better weapons than his words, his logic, and a deep sense of optimism. But the crucial ingredient of his faith was Mandela's certainty that even the worst of people can be redeemed – and his willingness to acknowledge even fleeting kindness from his tormentor.

Nelson Mandela's long life was a most remarkable one. From a barefoot child herding cows in a South African village, he became a child of privilege; a rebellious runaway; an impoverished student and father; a successful lawyer; a political idealist and dissident; a rising star in the African nationalist movement; an underground saboteur; the chief defendant in three show trials; a political prisoner; a secret negotiator with South Africa's rulers; a Nobel Peace Prize [winner](#) and president of his country; and an international statesman who held South Africa together long enough to find reconciliation and the path to prosperity.

But this is Mandela as seen from the outside; some of it is illusion. He saw himself as a pragmatic politician with one fixed goal: the end of white supremacy through votes for everyone. He knew fear and bitterness and often regretted his mistakes, but he learned to hide and subdue his feelings in order to reach his goal. Apart from that one overarching aim, everything else was tactics. If non-violence worked, he was for it; when bombs and guns were winning, he would use them, too. He started or suspended negotiations as the situation demanded and ignored grievances in favor of peace. If the cause required that he sacrifice his freedom and much of his personal life, well, so be it. He was always focused on the prize, and, in the end, he won it – and with it, the world's adulation and the enduring love of his people. This is his story.

1

“TROUBLEMAKER”

In Nelson Mandela's memory, his boyhood was idyllic. He lived in his mother's house, a dirt-floored thatched hut in the tiny village of Qunu, in the [Transkei](#) district some 550 miles south of Johannesburg. The villagers grew or raised everything they ate and wore - from beans, pumpkins, sorghum, and the maize used to make mealie pap, a kind of corn pudding, to sheep, goats, and cows, which provided meat, milk, and hides. Mandela played on the [veld](#) with the other village boys, gathering wild honey, swimming in clear streams, and drinking milk straight from the cow. He herded calves and sheep and learned the art of leading from the back - ambling behind the animals, subtly steering them in the direction he chose. The technique stayed with him. "It is wise," he said decades later, "to persuade people to do things and make them think it was their own idea."

On July 18, 1918, Nelson Mandela was born in the village of Mvesa, on the banks of the winding Mbashe River, where life was lived much as it had been for hundreds of years. He was part of a royal family. His great-grandfather, Ngubengcuka, had united the [Thembu](#) tribe of the [Xhosa](#) nation and had become their king. But Nelson's grandfather, Mandela, was the son of one of the king's lesser wives from a so-called left-hand house; he and his line were ineligible to rule and could only counsel the king. Nelson's father, the tall and stately Gadla Henry Mphakanyiswa, served as chief of the village of Mvezo and counselor to King Jongilezwe Dalindyebo. But the white government of South Africa maintained that tribal officials be ratified by the local white magistrate, and the proud Gadla considered that requirement an encroachment on tribal authority. He infuriated the magistrate in Mvezo by refusing to show up at a hearing to answer a complaint. Accusing him of corruption, the magistrate ousted Gadla, who subsequently lost most of his land, herd, and income.

Gadla had four wives, and his fall from grace brought hard times for them. To be near relatives, Nelson's mother, Nosekeni Fanny, moved to Qunu, a village of a few hundred people in a narrow, grassy valley dotted by beehive-shaped mud huts.

A Christian convert, Nosekeni sent her son to a Methodist school when he was seven. Though his father had named him Rolihlahla, a Xhosa colloquialism meaning "troublemaker," the schoolteacher called him Nelson. "Whites were either unable or unwilling to pronounce an African name and considered it uncivilized to have one," Mandela later wrote. "Why she bestowed this particular name on me I have no idea."

Two years later, Nelson's father died of an undiagnosed lung ailment. Soon afterward, Nosekeni Fanny told her son that he would be leaving Qunu. Keeping with the tribe's tradition of obedience, he didn't question where he was going or why. After a hot day's walk, his mother left him at Mqhekesweni, known to the Thembu people as the Great Place, and home of the royal palace of Chief Jongintaba Dalindyebo, then acting regent of the tribe. Jongintaba had become Nelson's guardian and would raise him as his own son.

Years later Mandela discovered why his life had been transformed. When the Thembu king Jongilezwe Dalindyebo died in the 1920s, his son Sabata was too young to take the throne and there had been a dispute as to which of Dalindyebo's three older sons should serve as regent until Sabata came of age. Gadla, Nelson's father, recommended Jongintaba, despite the fact that his mother came from a lesser house. Gadla held that Jongintaba was the best educated of the three and would be a good mentor to Sabata. After some argument, the tribe agreed. Now Gadla was dead, and Jongintaba was returning the favor.

The Great Place was magical, combining Western-style houses with African beehive-shaped huts. The men wore Western suits, and the women dressed in long skirts and high-necked blouses like missionary wives. Mandela went to the nearby Methodist school and worked as a plowboy, wagon guide, and shepherd. He was a brother to Jongintaba's son Justice and daughter Nomafu. The regent provided discipline, affection, and lessons in leadership at the frequent tribal meetings held in the palace courtyard.

Any Thembu man could attend such meetings, and many did. Mandela was startled by the blunt criticism the regent received - and tolerated. Jongintaba sat silently until every man had his say. After patiently listening for many hours, the regent would sum up the arguments and subtly guide the discussion toward a consensus. But he forced no decisions; if agreement couldn't be reached, another meeting would be called. It was yet another way of leading from the back.

Mandela was taught African history and took an interest in African nationalism, listening to the stories of the chiefs and headmen who came to the Great Place to adjudicate disputes. They told of warriors all over the region who had fought Western colonization. One elderly chief, Zwelibhangile Joyi, was especially eloquent, assailing the white man for dividing blacks and trying to foist off [Queen Victoria](#) as their true chief. She brought nothing but misery and perfidy, Joyi said. His stories, Mandela wrote, "made me feel angry and cheated, as though I had already been robbed of my own birthright."

At the age of sixteen, after the elaborate circumcision ritual that turned a Xhosa boy into a man, Mandela followed his older foster brother Justice to the Clarkebury Boarding Institute, which offered the best education open to black Africans in the Thembu district.

By his own admission, Mandela had become "a bit stuck up" because of his royal lineage and privileged life in the Great Place. At Clarkebury, he was a bumpkin who had to learn to wear shoes and catch up with other students both in class and on the playing fields. Never a brilliant student, Mandela struggled all his life to pass tests, but he began the dogged work habits that carried him through. He finished his three-year junior certificate in two.

Mandela also found his first girlfriend, a fellow student who became the model for all his future relationships with women: "With a woman I found I could let my hair down and confess to weaknesses I would never reveal to another man." He worked in the garden of headmaster Reverend C. Harris, a kind but outwardly stern disciplinarian who was dedicated to teaching blacks. From Harris and his wife Mandela got his first intimate sense of the life of a white family.

For the first time, he was taught by people with college degrees - some of them black Africans - and he was impressed by one black teacher, Ben Mahlasela, who was confident enough to disagree openly with the headmaster.

When he left Clarkebury, Mandela imagined his life would be in Thembuland as a counselor to the king. His horizon widened, however, when he moved on to Healdtown, the Methodist university where Thembu royals were educated. The principal, Arthur Wellington, was a descendant of the [victor at Waterloo](#), and the students were indoctrinated in the superiority of all things British. "We were taught - and believed - that the best ideas were English ideas," Mandela wrote, "the best government was English government, and the best men were Englishmen." It was here that Mandela made his first friend who wasn't a Xhosa and met a teacher who had married outside his tribe. "I began to sense my identity as an African, not just a Thembu or even a Xhosa," he recalled.

Mandela was made a prefect, helping to supervise and discipline his fellow students. One rainy night several students chose to urinate from the veranda onto the bushes below rather than walk to the outhouse. Mandela wrote fifteen of them up for punishment the next morning. He caught another only to discover that the culprit was a fellow prefect. "The prefect was above the law because he was the law," Mandela wrote, "and one prefect was not supposed to report another. But I did not think it fair to avoid reporting the prefect and mark down fifteen others." In the end, he tore up his list and reported none of them - a pragmatic compromise that would prove prophetic in his future career.

From Healdtown, Mandela moved to the University of Fort Hare, an elite black institution where he expected to get a Bachelor of Arts degree in two years. His life's goal had changed. Besides being a tribal counselor, he wanted to become a translator in South Africa's Native Affairs office, one of the most prestigious jobs in the country open to blacks. It was 1939, in the early days of [World War II](#), and Mandela, still a fan of all things British, became a passionate advocate of the Allied war effort.

He won his first battle with authority as a freshman when he instigated a rebellion against the seniors for bullying. But at the end of that year, after being elected a member of the Student Representative Council, Mandela resigned on principle: In a protest against the school's skimpy food offerings, he and most of the other students boycotted the election, so Mandela argued that the vote was invalid. The school principal, Alexander Kerr, told him that his behavior was irresponsible and threatened him with expulsion if he insisted on resigning. Mandela was torn, but he thought he had a right to resign. In the end, Kerr sent him home, saying he could return next year if he would take his seat on the council.

Back at the Great Place, Jongintaba was angry. He ordered his foster son to do as Kerr told him. Shortly afterward, however, the regent informed Mandela and Justice that he had arranged marriages for both of them. The "bride price" had already been paid.

Under tribal custom, Jongintaba had every right to take such an action. But both young men were dismayed. Their Westernized education had undermined tribal discipline. By then, Mandela wrote, "I was a romantic, and I was not prepared to have anyone, even the regent, select a bride for me." When Jongintaba couldn't be budged, Mandela and Justice fled to Johannesburg.

Most young black men went to Johannesburg to work in the gold mines along the great [Witwatersrand Reef](#), toiling deep underground for scant wages and living in bleak barracks under harsh discipline. But as Jongintaba's son, Justice was given a clerical job at Crown, the city's largest mine, and he convinced the *induna*, or headman, to hire Mandela as one of the mine's policemen. But after a few days, the brothers boasted of their cleverness to a friend, who told the *induna* that they had defied the regent at the Great Place and run away. Justice and Mandela were promptly fired. It was April of 1941, and Mandela had no money, no plan, and no prospects.

Mandela found refuge in a cousin's house, telling him that his real ambition was to become a lawyer. The cousin took him to see [Walter Sisulu](#), a young real-estate agent and community leader who was to become Mandela's lifelong friend and fellow freedom fighter. Sisulu introduced Mandela to Lazar Sidelsky, a liberal Jewish lawyer and partner in one of the city's most prominent law firms, who agreed to hire Mandela as an articled clerk (in the British Commonwealth, an apprentice lawyer) while he got his college degree in correspondence courses at the University of South Africa.

Mandela found lodgings in a dirt-floored, tin-roofed shack in the black township of Alexandra, one of several in the huge and growing black colony known as [Soweto](#). His two-pounds-per-week salary was barely enough to pay for food and lodging, let alone buy candles for studying at night. He went days with only scraps of food and often walked the six miles to and from work to save bus fare. Sidelsky gave him an old suit, which, "assisted by considerable stitching and patching," he wore every day for nearly five years. His landlord fed him a hearty lunch every Sunday, often his only hot meal of the week.

Toward the end of the year, Jongintaba came to Johannesburg and passed word to Mandela that he wanted to see him. The meeting was cordial; the regent seemed resigned to his foster son's independence and new course in life. Now that Mandela was back in the regent's good graces, the *induna* at the Chamber of Mines offered him free room and board in the mining compound, saving him thirteen shillings and four pence a month.

At the law office, Mandela's education continued. Sidelsky, his mentor, patiently coached him in legal procedures and their meanings. The older man warned Mandela not to get corrupted by politics. But a fellow articled clerk, Gaur Radebe (also a black man, a rarity in South African firms) introduced him to radical circles. A self-educated firebrand, Radebe was a member of the [African National Congress](#) (ANC), the black nationalist group that had been agitating for black voting rights since 1912, and a member of the Communist Party.

Mandela was intrigued with both causes. He had brushed up against the ANC several times at school, where some of his teachers had been members, and his friend and benefactor Walter Sisulu was an active ANC leader, but he had

been put off by its radicalism. Now that he had seen life in Johannesburg, black nationalism and [Marxism](#) seemed more reasonable. He soaked up information and doctrine at party gatherings and ANC meetings, but he never committed himself. Sidelsky cautioned him repeatedly – and presciently – what would happen if he took up politics: “Your practice will suffer. You will get into trouble with the authorities . . . You will lose all your clients, you will go bankrupt, you will break up your family, and you will end up in jail. That is what will happen if you go into politics.”

Nonetheless, Mandela marched with Gaur Radebe to bolster a bus boycott that Radebe had organized, demanding that a fare hike be rescinded. In spite of himself, Mandela joined the cause: “I found that to march with one’s people was exhilarating and inspiring.” Thanks largely to Radebe’s leadership, the boycott worked: After nine days, the company cut the fare from five pence to four.

After winning his correspondence-school Bachelor of Arts, Mandela signed up to study law at the prestigious University of the Witwatersrand. As the only black African student at the country’s best university, he encountered racism – openly and covertly. But the school was a breeding ground for liberal values, and he met people he would work with for the rest of his life in the fight to end white supremacy. Among them: [Joe Slovo](#), a white communist, and his future wife [Ruth First](#); [Bram Fischer](#), scion of an Afrikaner first family who would defend Mandela in his treason trials years later; and Ismail Meer, an Indian-bred student activist who introduced Mandela to South Africa’s Coloured (Asian and mixed race) community. Meer’s apartment in Johannesburg served as a gathering spot for young activists, who talked and argued late into the night. When it was too late to go home, Mandela slept on the floor.

He was still working at Sidelsky’s law firm, and thanks to Gaur Radebe, finally got the signed document that sealed his status as an articled clerk. Radebe told him that although the white lawyers would never admit it, Mandela wouldn’t be articled as long as Radebe was around; Radebe was experienced, with more contacts in the black community, and was already bringing business to the firm from black people needing mortgages and other legal services. It was important to the cause, Radebe said, for Mandela to become a lawyer so he could quit and start his own real-estate business to make room for Mandela to rise. Mandela protested, but Radebe left – and sure enough, Mandela got his articles.

It was a struggle to handle the work, keep up with his studies and indulge his growing activism. But he found himself growing ever angrier at the racist system that imprisoned his people.

Black Africans, officially called [Bantus](#) and colloquially insulted as kaffirs, were segregated from birth to death in inferior neighborhoods, homes, schools, jobs, and hospitals, and hemmed in on all sides by racist laws and regulations. They had curfews and were required at all times to carry passes to prove they had a job open to blacks, lived in a black neighborhood, and if they were in a white district, had a legitimate reason to be there. It was a system designed to keep blacks forever in bondage.

The slow accumulation of slights, indignities and insults took its toll on Mandela. “I had no epiphany,” Mandela wrote in his autobiography *Long Walk to Freedom*. “There was no particular day on which I said, henceforth, I will devote myself to the liberation of my people; instead, I simply found myself doing so and could not do otherwise.”

Walter Sisulu, reasonable and dispassionate, was Mandela’s principal tutor. From the moment Mandela walked into his office, Sisulu said later, he was taken with the younger man’s intelligence, his warm personality, and the magnetic smile that would become his trademark. Mandela would never become a stem-winding orator, but he was what the movement needed. Said Sisulu, “It was a godsend for a man like him to come along.” Sisulu befriended Mandela and took pains to teach him about the ANC and introduce him to other leaders – “My whole approach was to look for leadership, and I needed people of that caliber around me.” The two became inseparable.

For Nelson Mandela, the ANC was the unavoidable instrument of resistance and change. Thirty years after its founding, the organization saw opportunity in a time when Westerners were rediscovering the principles of democracy and human rights. Inspired by the [Atlantic Charter](#) signed in 1941 by U.S. President [Franklin Delano Roosevelt](#) and British Prime Minister [Winston Churchill](#), the ANC had written its own African Claims credo (later amplified as the [Freedom Charter](#)) calling for full citizenship, the right to buy land and the repeal of discriminatory laws for all Africans. Then and later, the ANC called for an inclusive society that embraced not only black Africans, but everyone who lived in South Africa. The ANC would collaborate with partners whose values were different, including black nationalists and communists, but its goal never changed.

At Sisulu’s house in Soweto Mandela met [Anton Lembede](#), a magnetic, eloquent black lawyer who was the law partner of one of the ANC’s founders. With a dozen other activists, Lembede argued that the ANC’s leadership had grown tired and less militant, a privileged elite that had lost sight of the movement’s goal. The rebels formed a delegation to urge ANC President [Alfred B. Xuma](#) to permit the founding of a Youth League to light a fire under the leadership. A surgeon who had revitalized the ANC’s finances by cultivating the white establishment, Xuma felt threatened by the idea and resisted, but the young men took their proposal to the ANC’s annual convention in 1943 and got it passed as a way of recruiting new members. Lembede was elected president of the new Youth League. [Oliver Tambo](#), a friend of Mandela’s from Fort Hare, was made secretary, with Sisulu as treasurer and Mandela a member of the executive committee. The league would soon have branches in every South African province.

Also at Sisulu’s house, Mandela met [Evelyn Mase](#), a quiet, self-confident nurse-in-training from the Transkei. After a brief, intense courtship, the two married in 1944 in a civil ceremony at the native commissioner’s court; they couldn’t afford a traditional wedding or feast. It would be two years before they could have a house of their own in [Orlando West](#), a dusty black township that was also part of the black Johannesburg suburb of Soweto. Their first son was born and named Madiba, Mandela’s clan name. A daughter, Makaziwe, followed, but she died of an undiagnosed ailment at nine months.

Finishing his three-year contract with Sidelsky, Mandela left the firm to study full-time for his law degree. Evelyn, then

pregnant with Makaziwe, took maternity leave from her nursing job as well, and Mandela got a government scholarship that made up part of the lost income.

2

“WHERE DOES
DADDY LIVE?”

The sudden death of Anton Lembede seemed a crushing blow to the ANC Youth League, but his eloquence, energy, and ideas gave way to the more considered leadership of Peter Mda, and the Youth League evolved from a group of rebels to the activist wing within the ANC itself. Mandela had been one of the Africanist firebrands in the Youth League; he resisted joint action with Coloured or communist groups, fearing they would dominate the ANC, and went so far as to break up communist meetings by storming the stage, commandeering the microphone, and tearing up signs. Now, as part of the executive committee of a regional ANC, he began to identify with the main organization, which soon signed a cooperation agreement with several Coloured activist groups. With a common front, they began to mount joint campaigns against provincial governments across the country. Mandela, however, persuaded his regional committee that the ANC shouldn't take part in any campaign that it wasn't actually leading – "I was more concerned with who got the credit than whether the campaign would be successful," he wrote – and he actually proposed a vote of no confidence against his good friend C.S. Ramohano for joining a right-to-vote campaign led by a Coloured organization. He had forgotten the pragmatic lesson he had learned as a prefect: Loyalty to the group's policy trumped loyalty to a friend.

Mandela's opposition to the government in those days was based more on hatred of whites than hatred of racism. But whites were increasingly easy to hate. In 1948, the relatively moderate United Party, led by General [Jan Smuts](#), was unexpectedly defeated in South Africa's all-white election by the Afrikaner-led National Party of Dr. [Daniel Malan](#). The Nationalists still resented losing power to the British in the [Boer War](#) and openly sympathized with the [Nazis](#) in World War II.

Malan's platform of apartheid - meaning apartness - institutionalized white supremacy in South African life, with new laws and regulations creating a monolithic system to back up the slogan, "*Die wit man moet altyd baas wies*" – the white man must always be boss. The [Dutch Reformed Church](#) reinforced the credo, maintaining from the pulpit that Afrikaners were God's chosen people and blacks were not.

Under Peter Mda, the Youth League called for moderate African nationalism to recognize that South Africa was a multinational society. Mandela, however, was then a black nationalist; he later wrote that while he wasn't for throwing white people into the sea, he wanted them all to leave.

Mandela urged a new, [Gandhi](#)-like policy of mass mobilization. President Xuma didn't agree. When Mandela, Sisulu, and Tambo visited him to explain the plan of nonviolent, passive resistance under which ANC leaders would be willing to violate the law and go to jail if necessary, Xuma said it was premature. He made it clear that he wasn't about to jeopardize his thriving medical practice. The Youth League persuaded the ANC to replace Xuma with another wealthy black doctor, J.S. Moroka, and to adopt a Programme of Action calling for boycotts, strikes, civil disobedience, and non-cooperation to win political rights.

But it was the Communist Party that led a one-day national strike on [May Day](#) in 1950. Although the ANC's [Transvaal](#) regional group helped organize the action, the national ANC took no part due to Mandela's objection that the communists were trying to upstage the ANC's own National Day of Protest. The strike was a success - more than two-thirds of black workers stayed home that day. But it provoked bullets and baton-swinging charges from the police, with eighteen dead and hundreds wounded. Parliament passed the draconian [Suppression of Communism Act](#), which not only outlawed the party but criminalized any doctrine or group that backed "political, industrial, social, or economic change . . . by the promotion of disturbance or disorder."

Mandela had taken Xuma's seat on the ANC executive committee, and the government crackdown persuaded him that it was time to accept united action by oppressed groups. Subsequently, the ANC formed a Congress Alliance with two Coloured organizations, the South African Indian Congress and the African People's Organizations, to mount a one-day national demonstration on June 26 to protest the May-Day massacre and the new law. It was the ANC's maiden effort at a national political strike, and it was only a moderate success. Still, it raised the group's profile, and despite the new law, the government did not retaliate by outlawing the ANC.

On the day of the strike, Evelyn gave birth to Mandela's second son, Makgatho. In the days and weeks leading up to the strike, with Mandela frantically trying to organize it and handle a new full-time job at another law firm, he arrived home long after his family was in bed and left again three hours later before anyone else was up. His first son, Madiba, asked Evelyn a poignant and echoing question: "Where does Daddy live?"

The new ANC leadership's next move, in 1952, was Walter Sisulu's idea, and it was a major risk. No mere one-day strike, it was a full-blown civil disobedience action scheduled to last six months. The campaign aimed to persuade Prime Minister Malan to revoke six laws underpinning apartheid, most of them given Orwellian titles to mask their real purpose. The livestock limitation law ostensibly aimed to curb overgrazing, but it put new limits on land for black Africans. During the [Defiance Campaign Against Unjust Laws](#), volunteers would openly defy the laws. They would be arrested and jailed and might well lose their jobs and even the right to live in their own homes.

As the chief national volunteer, Mandela was in charge of recruiting and training both ANC members and their Coloured allies. They must be prepared, he told them, to stay peaceful under all circumstances, meeting brutality with nonviolence. Some, including [Manilal Gandhi](#), the African-born son of India's inventor of civil disobedience, argued that nonviolence was a sacred principle and morally necessary. But in those early years Mandela held that it was just a tactic to be used as long as it was effective.

On the campaign's first day, 250 selected volunteers around the country were jailed. Over the next five months, more than 8,500 joined the cause, spending anywhere from a few nights to a few weeks in jail. ANC membership quintupled, to 100,000 people, and Mandela traveled the country organizing the individual actions.

The South African government tried its best to disrupt the campaign, infiltrating spies and double agents into the ANC

and sending out propaganda claiming that the ANC leaders were living in luxury while their people languished in jail. The government arrested the twenty-one leaders of the campaign and put them on trial in September. But the campaign was effective: Huge crowds of demonstrators of all races marched in the streets of Johannesburg, converged on the court, and packed the courtroom. The defendants were found guilty of "statutory communism," a charge that could be brought against anyone regardless of party affiliation. The judge suspended their nine-month sentence for two years.

Mandela had already been jailed for two days in one of the first demonstrations of the campaign and found it a generally uplifting experience. "Spirits were high," he reported, and the prisoners sang in unison on the way to jail and protested when one of them was mistreated. Despite dingy conditions, "we were all together and so impassioned and spirited that I barely noticed my surroundings. The camaraderie of our fellow defiers made the two days pass very quickly." It was a small, deceptive taste of the ordeal to come.

The Defiance Campaign, Mandela concluded, was a partial success. The leaders allowed it to drag on for too long until its momentum flagged and people tired of the struggle. It never achieved liftoff to the planned second stage of mass defiance, with spontaneous uprisings in the countryside. But despite the lack of paid staff or organizers, the campaign had attracted great public support and hordes of new members. It had lifted the stigma of going to jail and instead made it a badge of honor among Africans. Discipline had held, without a single act of violence from the defiers. In all, the campaign marked the beginning of a new chapter in the fight for freedom. The upstarts who had deposed the old ANC leaders had made their mark and set the new tone.

The annual ANC conference at end of 1952 sealed the transformation. The delegates elected a new leader, [Albert Luthuli](#), a tall, self-confident Zulu chief who left his government-paid tribal post rather than resign from the ANC. Mandela, now leading the regional ANC in the Transvaal, was automatically a deputy president of the national group, but the delegates rewarded him for his work in the Defiance Campaign by making him first deputy president, behind only Luthuli. Walter Sisulu's hunch was now vindicated: Nelson Mandela had the stuff of leadership. As a sign of respect, his colleagues were now calling him by his clan name, Madiba.

But he wasn't at the convention to enjoy his moment. Along with fifty-one other ANC leaders, Mandela had been banned by the South African government.

Banning was an especially pernicious way to stifle dissent. A banned person was forced to resign from any organizations the government specified and was barred from attending gatherings of any kind. Publications were forbidden to print any of a banned person's speeches or writings. "It was a kind of walking imprisonment," Mandela wrote. In effect, a ban eliminated a person from public life, forcing him or her to live in a narrow private space that touched only a few other lives. For the government, no proof nor any charges need be supplied. The minister of justice simply declared that Mandela was banned. From that point, if he ignored or violated the ban, he could be thrown in jail.

It was possible, of course, to evade the ban by using disguises, meeting in secret, and writing under a pseudonym. But these expedients were risky, and banned people used them sparingly. The ban became a "psychological claustrophobia," Mandela wrote, a self-censorship "that makes one yearn for not only freedom of movement but spiritual escape."

Nonetheless, his colleagues immediately told him what had happened at the convention – largely the result of a clandestine decision to adopt one of Mandela's own plans.

Before the meeting, he had predicted that the government would soon declare the ANC an illegal organization. In response, the ANC's ruling council sent orders to him to prepare plans to take the organization underground. In secret consultation with both banned and free leaders, Mandela devised what came to be known as the M-plan. Modeled after the Communist Party's underground structure, the M-plan broke the membership into cells of no more than ten households each, with a structural network of command and communications designed to preserve secrecy and centralized control. There were also political lectures, conducted in secret at the cell level to educate and motivate the members. Mandela often served as a lecturer. At first, while the ANC was still legal, the M-plan served as a kind of rehearsal and a way to keep the banned leaders active and in touch with the members. It wasn't essential or totally successful; some regional leaders resisted it as an encroachment on their authority. When the government finally banned the ANC, the leaders who had dismissed the plan weren't ready.

For much of his time, however, Mandela focused on his career and his family – and there were highs and lows in both.

After leaving Sidelsky's firm in 1951, Mandela worked for a year for an Afrikaner firm, then joined a more liberal partnership, Helman & Michel. It was one of the few law firms in Johannesburg that did not charge its black African clients higher fees than wealthy whites paid. Mandela had given up his law studies at the University of Witwatersrand after failing the exams several times, but chose to take a qualifying exam so that he could practice law. Passing it, he joined another firm as a full-fledged lawyer, but left in August 1952 to open his own office. He was the first independent black attorney in town.

Meanwhile, Oliver Tambo, Mandela's ANC friend and schoolmate from the Fort Hare years, was working with another white law firm. Mandela would visit him at lunchtime, and Tambo eventually joined forces with Mandela in downtown Johannesburg offices rented from an Indian owner.

It was an opportune time for two talented black lawyers to open an office. Black Africans were under siege as the bonds of apartheid tightened. They could be jailed for virtually anything – walking through the wrong door, drinking from the wrong water fountain, riding on the wrong bus, living in the wrong neighborhood, being caught without a pass book or walking on the street after 11:00 p.m. It was a crime even to be unemployed or homeless. To top it off, the

government was cracking down on traditional privileges by evicting black people without recompense from land newly declared a "white area," or forbidding the sale of home-brewed beer. From the day Mandela & Tambo set up shop, clients were lining up outside their doors.

The partners were hardly getting rich: Few of their clients were able to pay their fees. Mandela and Tambo also battled prejudice - from police, from judges, and always from local officials. Black lawyers needed official permission to have offices in the city, and the first black law firm was turned down. The officials told the partners to move to a black district miles away that would have been all but inaccessible to most of their clients. They ignored the order, choosing to live with the constant threat of eviction. For whatever reason, they were left where they were, and their reputation grew with their practice. Mandela was "a man of the city," he wrote, wearing snappy suits and driving "a colossal Oldsmobile."

If Mandela's professional life was flourishing, his marriage was strained. Evelyn had been unhappy since his long, frequent absences in his first ANC leadership period, and had never accepted that he wanted to make the cause of black equality his life. She was convinced they would move back to the Transkei one day, where Mandela would practice law and be a counselor to his cousin Sabata, now the king. "I patiently explained to her that politics was not a distraction but my life work," Mandela wrote, but "she could not accept this." Evelyn distanced herself. In 1953, to improve her credentials as a nurse, she enrolled in a midwifery course lasting for several months in Durban. Mandela's mother and sister were now living with the couple and could look after the children in their mother's absence. Mandela wrote that he visited his wife in Durban once.

When Evelyn came home, she announced that she had become a member of the Protestant sect Jehovah's Witnesses. She urged her husband to become more religious, arguing that serving God was more important than serving his country. His bans had expired, and he was free to attend ANC meetings in the evenings, another source of friction: She accused him of seeing other women. They had another daughter, Makaziwe, named for the baby who had died. Now Evelyn's sons, Madiba and Makgatho, were handing out religious literature to the neighbors, while Mandela tried to teach them about black oppression. In 1955, Evelyn gave Mandela an ultimatum: Choose between her and the ANC. That demand hung between them for well over a year.

Meanwhile, Mandela continued his work with the ANC.

After the Defiance Campaign, the ANC's next major test came with the government's threat to clear out the [Sophiatown](#) district of Johannesburg and forcibly relocate the people living there. This was part of the Western Areas Removal scheme, an alleged slum clearance program designed to vacate three traditionally black suburbs and reclaim the land for white housing. Sophiatown was seen by its inhabitants as a kind of Greenwich Village, home to artists, writers and black professionals as well as gangsters and entertainers, so it was a natural gathering spot those for resisting the law.

The ANC protest began in earnest in 1953, as the government's schedule for the program tightened. Under close surveillance by the police, the ANC held rallies and protest meetings every Sunday, centered on the slogan, "Over Our Dead Bodies!" It was a lively and provocative slogan, but in hindsight, Mandela wrote, it promised entirely too much: The ANC wasn't ready to fight to the death, which could only have ended in defeat.

Mandela's own rhetoric grew similarly overheated. At one rally, carried away by the crowd's enthusiasm, he found himself saying what he had only begun to think - that passive resistance had run its course and that the time for violence was near. He led the crowd in a freedom song: "There are the enemies, let us take our weapons and attack them." Then he pointed to the police officers surrounding the crowd and yelled, "There, there are our enemies!" The police pointed back, threatening him in return.

His performance earned him a stern rebuke from the ANC ruling council, who told him that such speeches could provoke the government to crush the organization altogether. He accepted the reprimand and managed to contain himself. But it wasn't long before he found himself banned again, and relegated to the sidelines of the struggle, feeling much "like a severed limb." Adding injury to insult, the Law Society of the Transvaal moved to disbar him, arguing that his political involvement constituted unprofessional and dishonorable conduct. But several prominent white attorneys jumped to his defense, and a judge vindicated him.

The Sophiatown battle lasted well into 1955 and ended in defeat. As the deadline for eviction neared, 500 young activists gathered on the scene, ready for an ANC order to defy the police and the army. They planned to throw up barricades and resist with any weapons they could find, forcing the relocation to happen, if at all, over their dead bodies. They felt bitter and betrayed when ANC leaders told them to stand down. In the end, 4,000 police and troops stood by while government trucks began moving families to a new settlement (called Meadowlands) and workers razed the vacant houses of Sophiatown. After a few weeks, with most of the local ANC leaders banned or arrested, all resistance collapsed.

Analyzing the failure afterward, Mandela concluded that the ANC had made several mistakes. It had offered no alternative to being relocated and had not recognized that at least some Sophiatown tenants had incentives to leave and might be better off in Meadowlands. Above all, Mandela thought the prime lesson was simply that the time of nonviolent resistance had come and gone. "In the end, we had no alternative to armed and violent resistance," he wrote in *Long Walk to Freedom*. "A freedom fighter learns the hard way that it is the oppressor who defines the nature of the struggle, and the oppressed is often left no recourse but to use methods that mirror those of the oppressor. At a certain point, one can only fight fire with fire."

The ANC's problem in the next confrontation, the [Bantu Education Act](#) in 1955, was different - in this case, confusion within the ANC itself.

The cause itself was crucial. Under the previous United Party government, education for black Africans had been provided mainly by foreign churches and missions. While the facilities for blacks were usually inferior to those offered white children, the educational model – the syllabus – was essentially the same. But the Nationalists' Bantu Education Act would turn the education of blacks over to the government, which would train them "in accordance with their opportunities in life." [Hendrik Verwoerd](#), minister of Bantu education, explained that since blacks couldn't expect any real opportunities, they would be trained as menial workers, forever inferior.

Passage of the act triggered a furor among blacks and white liberals alike. Control of the schools was to be transferred to the Native Affairs Department on April 1, and the ANC planned to boycott the schools starting that day. But there was a fierce argument over whether the boycott should be called for a week or last until the act was revoked.

Mandela and his allies said that while they would prefer an indefinite boycott, the ANC simply couldn't sustain it; it would require the creation of an alternative school system, perhaps lasting for years. The ruling council agreed, and called for children to be kept at home for a week to protest the act. But at the ANC'S annual conference, delegates rejected the recommendation and voted for an indefinite boycott. The council had no choice but to comply. Verwoerd then raised the stakes by warning that any boycotted schools would be permanently closed, and that children who stayed home would not be admitted again.

The boycott was spottily effective. Underground schools sprang up, some of them lasting for years despite draconian laws forbidding them. But in the end, the protest withered as most parents chose an inferior public education over none at all.

The boycott was not a total loss. It energized many new recruits, and the government was shaken enough to offer minor reforms of the Bantu Education Act. At one point, Verwoerd stated publicly that education should be the same for everyone. Perhaps the most important result, Mandela wrote, was that the children impacted by the Bantu Education Act grew up to be "the angriest, most rebellious generation of black youth the country had ever seen." In their teens and early twenties, he said, "they rose with a vengeance."

There was plenty of injustice to rise against. The Nationalist government, with Hendrik Verwoerd at the cutting edge, was in the process of unifying and institutionalizing apartheid into Grand Apartheid, the separate development of the races. Verwoerd saw it as a way of preserving white supremacy while countering the growing international criticism of South Africa's racism.

The core pretense was that black Africans all came from "homelands," or Bantustans, where their tribes had originated, and that they must continue to live there and "develop along their own lines." Blacks might temporarily have permission to live and work outside their homelands, but their legal residence remained there and they could own no property elsewhere. The Bantustans would be industrially developed to provide jobs, and the government would recognize and support tribal authority.

The plan would have been absurd if it weren't so malicious. Its end result relegated 87 percent of all the land in South Africa to 9 million white and Coloured people and gave 28 million blacks the remaining 13 percent. The Bantustans would be vast reservoirs of cheap labor for white industry, and blacks living and working outside their "homelands" would have no rights at all.

Neither Mandela nor anyone else in the ANC could propose an effective way to resist this juggernaut. When Mandela suggested taking part in the Bantustan structure as a way of staying in touch with the people and broadening their long-term appeal, he was shouted down. The ANC started no major new campaigns. Earlier that year, it had reached out to more than 200 other groups – black, Coloured, Indian and white – to organize a Congress of the People, with the aim of writing a Freedom Charter for a future democratic South Africa. The two-day gathering was a success, and the document it produced was a remarkable vision of a multiracial society with equal rights for all – the goal that the ANC had proclaimed from its beginning and would keep pursuing until apartheid finally crumbled.

Now, with apartheid and repression closing in, the ANC's leaders expected the group would soon be outlawed. Mandela was banned again in early 1956, this time for five years; he vowed to continue his work and not be intimidated.

He took up boxing, a sport he had toyed with as a schoolboy, and trained daily in a gym. He was never a good fighter, he wrote, but he relished the exercise and the science of self-defense. His ten-year-old son Madiba, known in the family as Thembi, went with him. When it was Thembi's turn to lead the exercise training sessions, he made the boxers laugh with his relentless teasing of his father: "Mr. Mandela, you are wasting our time this evening. If you cannot keep up, why not go home and sit with the old women?"

3

“LEADERSHIP IN SEARCH
OF FOLLOWERS”

The relatively peaceful lull ended with a hammering on Mandela's door at dawn on December 5. Head Constable Rousseau and two policemen searched his house for forty-five minutes, then hauled Mandela to jail on a warrant for high treason. Several of his ANC colleagues were already there. This was the sweeping roundup they had been expecting, and before it was over, almost all the top leaders of the ANC – 156 men and women – had been arrested.

The men were held for two weeks in two large communal cells, with no furniture and only thin pallets to sleep on. Spirits were high. To pass the time, they organized lectures, discussions, group singing and exercise. Banned leaders who had been forbidden to talk to their friends were now free to speak; leaders who had never met were now face to face. They were allowed newspapers, so they knew that the mass arrests had set off protests and demonstrations across the country and around the world. All told, Mandela wrote, the experience made for solidarity and strengthened their sense of purpose.

The supporters were on hand in huge numbers when the prisoners were formally indicted for high treason and conspiracy to overthrow the government in favor of a communist regime. To many followers – and to some defendants as well – the charges were a joke. They were not betraying their country. They were acting in defense of freedom and human dignity. But if convicted, it would be no joking matter: The penalty could be death. After four days of preliminary hearings, the prisoners were freed on bail – as with everything else in South Africa, on a sliding scale of apartheid: 250 pounds for whites, 100 pounds for Indians, twenty-five pounds for Coloured and African prisoners. It made as much sense as the rest of the system.

For Mandela, his arrest was also the end of his marriage. In jail he had had one visit from Evelyn, but when he got home she and the children had packed up and moved to her brother's house. She had taken even the curtains, a pinprick he felt painfully. Attempts to reconcile went nowhere. Mandela would always praise Evelyn as a charming, strong, faithful wife and a fine mother, but he accepted that he couldn't be what she wanted.

The preliminary phase of the treason trial dragged on for ten months. The Crown presented its evidence, an interminable collection of 12,000 documents, papers, speech transcripts, even labels from the cafeteria at the Congress of the People: "Soup with Meat," "Soup without Meat." Then the Crown's witnesses testified, many of them with a shaky command of facts easily demolished by the cross-examination of lead defense counsel Vernon Berrangé. The prosecution rested in September while the defense prepared its case; three months later, without explanation, the Crown dropped all charges against sixty-one of the defendants, including President Luthuli and Oliver Tambo. When the trial resumed in January, a new and more effective lead prosecutor showed up. Finally, the judge ruled that a full trial was justified. No one could say when it would begin.

The preliminary trial was still in session when Mandela first got a glimpse of his second wife. Driving past Baragwanath Hospital, the leading black hospital in Johannesburg, his head was turned by the striking beauty of a young woman standing at a bus stop. He considered turning around and driving by again, but dismissed the notion as silly.

Still, her face stayed with him, and several weeks later, when he walked into Oliver Tambo's office and found her sitting there, he was delighted. She was [Nomzani Winifred Madikizela](#), known as Winnie, the first black social worker in South Africa. She had turned down a scholarship in the United States to take a challenging job at the hospital, where one of her roommates turned out to be Tambo's fiancé. Winnie and her brother were consulting Tambo on a minor legal matter. Mandela was deeply stirred. He didn't know if it was possible to fall in love at first sight, he wrote in *Long Walk to Freedom*, but he did know "that the moment I first glimpsed Winnie . . . I knew that I wanted to have her as my wife."

Mandela called her next day to ask her to help raise funds for the treason defendants, and took her to lunch. They walked in the countryside, and he told her immediately that he meant to marry her. She attended the trial, went with him to the boxing gym, and took in ANC meetings and political discussions. They were married on June 14, 1958, in a church near her father's house in Bizana, a town not far from Mandela's home in the Transkei.

Winnie's father was not overjoyed at his daughter's choice. When she told him about Mandela, he erupted, "But you are marrying a jailbird!" He became reconciled to their marriage, more or less, but told Winnie at the wedding that he was not optimistic. He wished her good luck, but said she was marrying a man already married to his cause. "If your man is a wizard, you must become a witch," he concluded, meaning that she must follow Mandela whatever course he took.

Winnie did just that, suffering Mandela's long working hours, working hard alongside him on ANC campaigns and becoming a full partner in his life. Home was the same modest four-room house at 8115 Orlando West in Soweto he had shared with Evelyn. Mandela warned Winnie before they married that the treason trial was ruining his law firm; even after the charges against Tambo were dropped, both partners were too preoccupied with the defense to pay sufficient attention to the business. Mandela and Winnie would have to live mostly on her salary as a social worker.

Winnie's first major campaign with the ANC was a cause already close to her heart: the passbook system. Black men were required to carry their passbooks at all times to prove they were living and working legally. Now the government was determined to extend the requirement to women, and black women across the country were up in arms. One evening Winnie told Mandela that she planned to join a group protesting at the passbook office the next day. Hundreds had already been arrested there.

Mandela told her that he admired her courage and welcomed her to the cause. But he cautioned her that she had lived a relatively comfortable life, and he wasn't sure she knew what she was getting into. If she were arrested, she would surely be fired from her job and might never work as a social worker again. Also, she was pregnant, and the harsh conditions of jail could be risky.

But Winnie was determined, and the next morning he drove her to join her group headed for the passbook office. The

next time he saw her, she was beaming at him from a cell, one of a thousand women arrested that day whom he and Tambo were trying to get freed on bail. The next day the number had doubled, jamming the cramped, dirty jail cells and making them even more squalid. The male leaders of the ANC were anxious to get the prisoners out, but the female leaders insisted that if the protest were to be genuine, the prisoners had to serve their full sentences – which would further jam the already overloaded system. Many of the prisoners weren't prepared for what they found and were desperate to be bailed out. Mandela compromised with their leaders: He could bail them out after two weeks.

Winnie came home unperturbed. She had befriended two teenaged Afrikaner wardresses, who later came to visit Mandelas at home in Soweto – and were fired from their jobs for having ridden a black bus. As Mandela had predicted, Winnie was sacked for having been arrested. From then on, the Mandelas got by on his earnings as a lawyer, whatever she could make from a series of jobs, and contributions from political sympathizers.

When the formal treason trial began in August 1958 before a special panel of three judges, it was in the capital city, Pretoria, thirty-six miles from Johannesburg – a location designed for maximum inconvenience for the defendants, who had to make a four-hour daily round trip in an old bus to reach the courtroom. The trial would drag on for four years, through countless hours of tedious legal maneuvers. The defense team succeeded in forcing the replacement of two of the judges and steadily chipped away at the government's case. The indictment was repeatedly revised, and more defendants were dropped. On March 29, 1961, the judges ruled that the ANC was not a communist organization, that the Freedom Charter was not designed for a communist state, and that the ANC did not intend to overthrow the government by violence. To the cheers of a packed courtroom and the jubilation of the throngs outside, the remaining thirty defendants were cleared of all charges and set free.

Mandela did not take the victory as a vindication of South African justice. While he was grateful for the strength of the defense team and the fact that these three judges had been fair, he knew that the state would not permit such a result again, and that the days of observing legal niceties to protect defendants' rights were over. He wrote that while the treason trial did not feature the isolation, beating, and torture of prisoners, "all of those things became commonplace shortly thereafter." Nothing short of the end of apartheid would bring freedom to his people; to bring that about, the pressure on the government had to be continuous and relentless.

The trial was still in its third year when the ANC planned its largest action yet – a massive, nationwide campaign against the hated passbook laws. It was a huge undertaking. ANC officials toured the country to raise morale, and field workers spread the word in factories and townships. Leaflets, stickers and posters were printed and distributed. The campaign was to kick off with deputies visiting local governments on March 31, 1960, ending on June 26 with a huge bonfire of passes.

But there was a problem. The ANC's new rival, the Pan-Africanist Congress, saw the ANC as weak-kneed and insufficiently militant and had rejected the ANC's goal of a multiracial South Africa. The PAC's leaders were longtime friends and colleagues of the ANC's people; many were former ANC members who rebelled at its willingness to include Indians, Coloured citizens, and even whites as legitimate South Africans. Mandela was dismayed to find his benefactor Gaur Radebe listed among the PAC officers. Along with other black and Coloured groups, the PAC had been invited to join the ANC's passbook campaign. Instead, the PAC announced that it would have its own anti-passbook crusade, and would launch it ten days ahead of the ANC drive.

It was blatant sabotage. "They were a leadership in search of followers," Mandela wrote. "Their actions were motivated more by a desire to eclipse the ANC than to defeat the enemy." On March 21, PAC president [Robert Sobukwe](#) and his executive council turned themselves in to be arrested for not having passbooks. They were expecting a few weeks' jail time. Instead, Sobukwe got three years.

The PAC campaign was not well organized, and in most of South Africa, hardly anyone noticed. Only in the Cape Town area and in one area near Johannesburg had the PAC organizers mustered sizable demonstrations. Near Cape Town in Langa, 30,000 men and women rioted in response to a police baton-charge, and two were killed. But the killings that shook South Africa and much of the world came in the grim industrial township of Sharpeville, thirty-five miles south of Johannesburg.

A crowd of several thousand surrounded the Sharpeville police station in an orderly and unarmed demonstration. But the seventy-five policemen panicked, and without warning, opened fire and kept shooting as the demonstrators fled. In all, more than 700 shots were fired with more than 400 people wounded, most of them shot in the back. Sixty-nine were killed.

The Sharpeville massacre triggered a firestorm of outrage. Governments around the world protested. The United Nations Security Council condemned the South African government. The Johannesburg stock market plunged as capital began fleeing the country, and some South African whites made plans to emigrate. The government blamed a communist conspiracy.

The PAC was now seen as leading the fight for freedom, with Robert Sobukwe hailed as a hero. For the ANC, the problem was how to shoulder back into the lead. Mandela, Sisulu, and two other ANC leaders met all night and came up with a plan, which ANC President Luthuli quickly approved. He publicly burned his pass, calling on others to do the same, and announced a national stay-at-home Day of Mourning for the Sharpeville dead, to be held on March 28, a week after the massacre. Only the ANC, already geared up for its passbook campaign, could organize and coordinate such a massive effort, and several hundred thousand Africans answered the call. Rioting broke out in several places. The government declared a State of Emergency and imposed martial law. The outlawed ANC was again leading the cause in South Africa.

The defendants in the treason trial were again rounded up and jailed. When they were not in court, they were held in a

Pretoria prison for the five-month duration of the Emergency. In the initial roundup, however, there was one moment of comic relief: One defendant, Wilton Mkwayi, got separated from the others. When he tried to rejoin the group, a policeman told him to leave. Mkwayi said he was a defendant, but the officer called him a liar. When the angry policeman gave him a choice – leave, or be arrested – Mkwayi shrugged and walked away. He went underground and was later smuggled out of the country.

During the Emergency, the defense lawyers left the case to protest the jailing and the difficulty of consulting their clients. Mandela himself ran the defense for these five months, dragging out the case with endless cross-examination until the lawyers could return.

The lifting of the Emergency didn't restore the ANC to legality or end Mandela's personal bans, so the ANC had to operate under a modified "M-plan," streamlining itself to function underground as it planned ways to stay in touch with sympathetic groups that remained legal. Although Mandela & Tambo had closed its doors, Mandela could still practice as a lawyer, but the ANC leaders decided that he, too, should go underground, to travel the country organizing a national convention to draw up a new constitution for South Africa.

Unlikely a goal as it may have seemed given the increasingly draconian policies of the Nationalist government, the idea of a new constitution touched a chord in liberals of all stripes across South Africa. Mandela had taken advantage of the end of his most recent banning to deliver the keynote speech at a national conference to call for a convention, and 1,400 delegates from 150 organizations had cheered him. They elected Mandela to head a National Action Council to demand that Prime Minister Hendrik Verwoerd call a convention, and they planned to organize a three-day national stay-at-home if he refused. Mandela duly made the request to Verwoerd in a letter, which Verwoerd didn't deign to answer – except to describe it in Parliament as "arrogant."

By the time Mandela went underground, the day after his acquittal in the treason trial, it was plain that the government had no intention of calling any constitutional convention. Thus Mandela's assignment was not to organize delegates, but to get ready for the three-day national stay-at-home intended to punish the government's refusal. It was set for May 29; he had just under two months to prepare.

Living underground, Mandela wrote, is a matter of playing roles, and "you must fully inhabit whatever role you have assumed." This was something a black man in South Africa was used to doing, since apartheid demanded a constant balance between playing by the rules and breaking the law, between openness and concealment. Being black meant conforming to whatever the whites expected.

Mandela traveled the country and literally worked in the dark, staying in borrowed safe quarters during the day and making secret contacts and holding meetings at night. He learned to be inconspicuous, all but invisible, simply by speaking softly, walking tentatively, slumping a bit and behaving passively. He disguised himself most often as a chauffeur, a chef, or a gardener. He had a car, which he drove in the guise of a chauffeur, wearing round rimless glasses and a chauffeur's cap and clad in shapeless blue overalls or a long driving coat. There was a warrant out for his arrest, and his fugitive existence soon intrigued the South African press. Articles, some of them accurate, began to appear, noting his visits at various locations. Police roadblocks failed to snare him, and soon he was given the nom-de-guerre "the Black Pimpernel."

This was a reference to the [Scarlet Pimpernel](#) created by the British Baroness [Emmuska Orczy](#) in 1905. The Pimpernel was the dashing alter ego of a seemingly foppish, dimwitted British baronet who rescued hapless victims from the guillotine during the [French Revolution](#). Slipping away from pursuers, he would leave behind a card depicting a small red flower, the scarlet pimpernel.

Mandela liked to feed his legend: He would call selected reporters from public telephones to tell of his exploits or hint at the ANC's plans.

He grew a beard, which he liked and refused to shave even after the police circulated a photo of his bearded face. His disguises and fugitive persona were highly effective. Once, driving in his glasses, overalls, and a workman's cap, he stopped at a traffic light and glanced at the next car. In it was the chief of the Witwatersrand Security Branch. Mandela reported that it was a long traffic light, but the colonel took no notice of him.

On another occasion he arrived at a safe house where a night's visit had been arranged for him. The elderly woman who answered the doorbell took one look at the disheveled Mandela and said, "No, we don't want such a man as you here." Then she slammed the door.

But South Africa's black police officers were often helpful. One sergeant in particular would give Winnie tips, telling her, "Make sure Madiba is not in Soweto tonight. There is going to be a raid." One afternoon while waiting on a Johannesburg street corner to be picked up by friends, Mandela saw a policeman striding toward him and got ready to run. Then the officer smiled at him and flashed an inconspicuous ANC thumbs-up salute.

As the May 29 stay-at-home day drew closer, the government mounted an all-out effort to stifle it. Meetings were banned, and printing presses were seized. Opposition leaders all over the country were arrested, and a law was rushed through Parliament allowing the police to hold them without charges or bail for twelve days. Verwoerd declared that supporters of the strike, including newspapers, were "playing with fire." The English-language press had been publicizing the protest, but just before the deadline the newspapers unanimously urged their readers to go to work. Predictably, the PAC was doing the same.

Two days before the stay-at-home was to begin, the government staged the greatest military show of force in South Africa's peacetime history. Tanks rumbled through the black townships, with helicopters overhead diving down to break

up throngs of people. Police vacations were canceled. Troops were stationed at the entrances to townships. Mandela had his closest call yet at a police roadblock, where a white officer searched his car and demanded his pass. Mandela managed to remain calm and told the officer he had left the pass at home by mistake, reciting its fictitious number for reassurance. The policeman let him go.

Overall, the response to the stay-at-home was disappointing. While hundreds of thousands risked their jobs by not showing up, the record was spotty. In Johannesburg, half of all workers stayed away; in Durban, Indian workers actually walked out of factories. There was enough good news that Mandela told the press that the response was "magnificent." But on the second day, after consulting his colleagues, he called the campaign off. Better to admit defeat than to expose loyal supporters to reprisals in what was clearly a losing cause.

That day, in a safe apartment in a white section of town, Mandela met with reporters from the local and foreign press. Again he said that the stay-at-home had been "a tremendous success." But without consulting or forewarning any of his fellow ANC leaders, he signaled a momentous change of policy. If the government meant to crush the ANC's non-violent tactics with naked force, he said, the ANC would have to change its tactics. "In my mind," he concluded, "we are closing a chapter on this question of a non-violent policy."

He knew his announcement would not be well received, and he was right; the ANC executive council censured him. "But sometimes," he wrote, "one has to go public with an idea to push a reluctant organization in the direction you want it to go."

It took Mandela several weeks and a great deal of argument to nudge the ANC to his destination. He and Sisulu had been discussing a possible armed struggle since 1952, but that was between themselves. Non-violence had been built into the ANC's creed for generations, and the Indian and Coloured organizations allied with the ANC were implacably opposed to change. The first time Mandela raised the subject in a secret meeting of the ANC's executive council, he got nowhere.

With Sisulu's help, he spent an entire day arguing his case with [Moses Kotane](#), one of the most powerful leaders of the ANC and his chief opponent at the meeting. He told Kotane that the times and the government's policies had made non-violence obsolete, and he quoted an African proverb, *Sebatana ha se bokwe ka diatla* – a wild beast's attack can't be stopped with bare hands. Some ANC members were already forming military units, Mandela said, and the only organization strong enough to lead them was the ANC itself. The people were getting ahead of the leaders, who must now get out in front. Worn down, Kotane told him to bring up the issue again in council the following week.

This time, Kotane offered no objections, and the council told Mandela to take the proposal to the National Executive at yet another secret meeting. Mandela knew ANC President Luthuli, who had won the [Nobel Peace Prize](#) in 1960 and was deeply committed to nonviolence, would be opposed. But after an all-night argument, even Luthuli agreed that a military campaign was inevitable. Luthuli stipulated that it should be an independent effort, however, linked to the ANC but not officially part of it, to preserve the ANC's tradition of non-violence and its relations with other non-violent groups.

The next night, at a joint meeting with Indian and Coloured organizations and a trades-union ally, the discussion was hashed out again. It was another all-nighter, with the Indian groups in particular pleading for Gandhian restraint. "Non-violence has not failed us," one delegate said. "We have failed non-violence." Not so, said Mandela; non-violence had failed; it had not stopped the state's brutality or softened white hearts. The joint council at last agreed with Mandela, and he had its blessing to form a new military unit, autonomous of the ANC.

4

“AN OUTLAW IN
MY OWN LAND”

Mandela's army was to be called *Umkhonto we Sizwe*, Spear of the Nation, or MK for short. But that was the sum of his thoughts about it or of his military knowledge in general. Would it be geared for open rebellion, guerrilla warfare, or merely underground acts of sabotage? What was its purpose? How could it find, train and maintain recruits?

He discovered a trove of literature on warfare, especially guerrilla warfare, and read it avidly. He recruited Walter Sisulu and Joe Slovo, the white communist leader, to join MK's High Command. They agreed that open revolution wouldn't be feasible, and terrorism would backfire by undermining popular support. Guerrilla warfare would have to wait for a better level of organization and funding. For now, their mission was to wage acts of sabotage against the state, focusing on causing maximum damage to the government, but to avoid hurting people. Sabotaging military installations, power plants, railroads, and telephone lines would weaken the regime, cut into foreign investment, and hurt the economy - providing incentives for the government to come to the bargaining table.

They organized MK along the lines of the ANC's underground structure, building from local cells through regional commands to the national High Command. Slowly, the army began to take shape as they recruited key members with experience in demolitions, underground Communist Party operations, and guerrilla warfare from such places as Palestine.

From his underground refuge, Mandela wrote an open letter to the South African newspapers, pledging not to surrender but to fight "as an outlaw in my own land." With the people of South Africa, he wrote, he would fight the government "side by side with you, inch by inch, and mile by mile, until victory is won." While he stopped short of promising armed and violent action, he concluded: "Only through hardship, sacrifice, and militant action can freedom be won. The struggle is my life. I will continue fighting for freedom until the end of my days."

Mandela was living under an assumed name, David Motsamayi. As before, he lived in safe houses, staying with white friends and supporters and moving whenever he felt unsafe. Once he heard men outside the house discussing why someone had put a cup of milk on the window sill to curdle - a yogurt-like dish that only black people enjoyed and that Mandela had incautiously prepared for himself. Another time he knew he had stayed too long when an old black man asked him to explain ANC president Luthuli's policies.

He moved to [Liliesleaf Farm](#), a decayed country estate in Rivonia north of Johannesburg that the ANC and its financial backers had bought and restored as a safe house for its underground members. The farmhouse and outbuildings had rooms for several fugitives, who could pose as servants and farmworkers, with cover provided by a resident white family whose background seemed above suspicion. There, not often enough, Winnie brought Mandela's children for brief, happy visits.

On December 16, 1961, MK exploded a series of homemade bombs at power stations and government offices in Johannesburg, Durban, and Port Elizabeth. That same day, thousands of leaflets distributed around the country announced the existence of Spear of the Nation, promising to continue the struggle for freedom by "new methods which are necessary to complement the actions of the established national liberation movement." A second set of explosions on New Year's Eve drowned out the celebratory bells, and the government launched a full-scale effort to root out and destroy Mandela and his army.

For the first time in his life, Nelson Mandela left South Africa. What began as a trip to attend a conference of the Pan-African Freedom Movement in Ethiopia turned into an African tour. At the conference, Mandela met his partner Tambo, who had been on diplomatic service for the ANC in London; he hadn't seen Tambo for several years and almost didn't recognize him. Their reunion was joyous.

In his travels, Mandela ran into a delegation from the Pan-Africanist Congress, including his old friend Gaur Radebe. Ever the diplomat, Mandela refrained from protesting the PAC's efforts to undermine ANC campaigns, preferring to talk about their common struggle for freedom. Their first meetings were cordial. Then Mandela found that his PAC rivals were belittling the ANC throughout Africa, saying that *Umkhonto we Sizwe* was a Communist Party plot designed to make cannon fodder out of black Africans. Mandela set out to refute the libel and denied it convincingly enough to win support and at least token financial backing from President [Habib Bourguiba](#) of Tunisia, President [William Tubman](#) of Liberia, President [Sekou Toure](#) of Guinea, President [Julius Nyerere](#) of Tanganyika, and President [Leopold Senghor](#) of Senegal.

Mandela's speech to the Pan African Freedom Movement conference was a great success. While many governments were reluctant to endorse violent action, he persuaded the delegates that rebels against the South African regime had no alternative. He then flew with Tambo to London for ten days of meetings with supporters and politicians, interspersed with a bit of tourism. There they agreed that to counter the malign influence of the PAC, the ANC must appear more independent of its Indian and Coloured partners in the Congress Alliance and take some unilateral stands, particularly on issues affecting black Africans, and generally become first among equals. That would prove difficult to sell at home in South Africa and tough to explain to the ANC's partners.

Mandela had arranged to take six months of military training in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. But after just eight weeks of intensive training in hand-to-hand combat, small arms, explosives and demolition, command, and guerrilla warfare, he got an urgent message from the ANC: Come home. The struggle with the government was heating up.

Once home, the first item on the agenda was his proposal that the ANC should lead the Congress Alliance. The executive council sent Mandela to Durban to explain it to President Luthuli and the leaders of the Indian and Coloured groups in the alliance. None of them liked the idea, and they were even more put off by the prospect of the ANC's backing away from a non-racial policy to focus on black Africans. Mandela tried to explain that the change would be purely cosmetic and was meant to avoid alienating supporters abroad. Luthuli agreed only to think about it.

On the drive back to Johannesburg on August 5, 1962, Mandela was surrounded by police cars. They had been waiting for him for several days; he speculated later that an informer must have infiltrated the ANC, but realized in any case that he had been much too casual about his security arrangements. The only saving grace in the whole fiasco was that the police somehow failed to find the gun and notebook he had stuffed into the car's upholstery during the arrest. The notebook had been a special risk; if found, many of Mandela's contacts would have been caught.

He was taken to jail in Johannesburg, where he recognized a familiar cough from the neighboring cell as Walter Sisulu's. Sisulu had been nabbed soon after Mandela's arrest - a fact that both men thought was not coincidental - and they spent the night filling each other in on their activities.

At his arraignment next day, Mandela found the magistrate, the prosecutors, and other attorneys in court - all of them old acquaintances - oddly diffident and uneasy. That led to an epiphany, he wrote in *Long Walk to Freedom*: "These men were not only uncomfortable because I was a colleague brought low, but because I was an ordinary man being punished for his beliefs. . . . I was the symbol of justice in the court of the oppressor." He understood that he could continue that role throughout his trial, putting the state itself on trial. "I realized then and there that I could continue the fight even within the fortress of the enemy."

To underscore his role as victim, he refrained from applying for bail, and when the ANC proposed a plan to escape, he rejected it. His capture brought huge crowds to the courthouse for his preliminary hearings, and a Free Mandela Committee was organizing major demonstrations for his trial in Pretoria; there would be no lack of attention. He conducted his own defense, and to dramatize the case of a black African appearing in a white court, Mandela showed up wearing a traditional Xhosa leopard-skin *kaross*. The spectators stood and cheered, waving clenched fists. When the prison warders tried to confiscate the *kaross*, Mandela threatened to take the issue all the way to the Supreme Court. They permitted him to wear it. Winnie, who had visited him regularly in the Pretoria jail, attended the trial every day in a Xhosa dress of her own.

Speculation was rife in the ANC over how Mandela had been caught and who might have betrayed him. Mandela worried that this was a dangerous distraction that could hurt the cause, especially when press reports suggested that white and Indian communists had turned him in for proposing to make the ANC first among equals in the Congress Alliance. Winnie helped scotch the rumors in a speech opening the annual conference of the Transvaal Indian Youth Congress. "We shall not waste time looking for evidence as to who betrayed Mandela," she said. "Such propaganda is calculated to keep us fighting one another instead of uniting to combat the Nationalist opposition." The speculation was squelched.

Mandela was on trial not for sabotage and treason - the authorities didn't have enough evidence of his involvement with MK to support that charge - but for inciting workers to strike and traveling without documents. If convicted, he could face a ten-year prison sentence. He didn't refute the charges. In opening his defense, Mandela said, "This case is a trial of the aspirations of the African people." From the start, he put the government on the trial. He said he was not morally bound to obey laws passed by a Parliament that did not represent him and that it was impossible for a black man to get a fair trial before a white judge. "I am a black man in a white man's court," he concluded. "This should not be."

After the prosecutor had presented more than a hundred witnesses, it was Mandela's turn. He flabbergasted the court by calling no witnesses at all. The state's case was solid enough to make defense futile, he reasoned, and this tactic would underscore his point that in any case, the outcome was preordained. But his closing statement defiantly denounced the injustice of a system that had forced him to become an outlaw, and he promised to resume the struggle when his prison term was done. "I have no doubt," he said, "that posterity will pronounce that I was innocent and that the criminals that should have been brought before this court are the members of the government."

Ten minutes later, the judge issued a guilty verdict and passed sentence: five years, without possibility of parole. The spectators defiantly began singing the anthem, *Nkosi Sikelel' iAfrica*. The singing carried on outside the court as Mandela was allowed a brief farewell visit with his wife.

He would be in prison for twenty-seven years.

Mandela's first weeks in Pretoria Local, a gloomy, red brick hulk of a prison, were sadly educational. He began in feisty fashion. Colonel Jacobs, the superintendent, confiscated the *kaross* that Mandela had worn in court and issued him the standard prison garb for blacks: short trousers (befitting a black "boy"), a khaki shirt, a canvas jacket, socks, sandals, and a cloth cap. Mandela said he wouldn't wear shorts, and when he was given cold, stiff porridge for dinner, he refused to eat it. Jacobs told him he could wear long trousers and have better food if he accepted solitary confinement, and Mandela agreed.

It was a mistake. He soon lost track of time, spending twenty-three hours a day in a windowless cell with a bare light bulb always on and just two half-hour periods of exercise alone in the yard. He had nothing to read, no writing materials, no one to talk to. The hours crawled, and his mind turned inward. He tried in vain to strike up chats with his guards, and once, he wrote, "I found myself on the verge of initiating conversations with a cockroach." After several weeks, he sent word to Jacobs that he would trade his long pants and privileged diet for housing with the other political prisoners. Jacob agreed. "I don't think I ever looked forward to eating cold mealie pap so much in my life," Mandela wrote.

One of the political prisoners he now joined was Robert Sobukwe, the PAC president still serving the three-year term he had been given for lacking a pass. Far from holding a grudge against Sobukwe for the PAC's undermining of the ANC, Mandela hoped they could start a dialogue that would forge unity between the two organizations. While they didn't agree on every point, they had constructive talks and even wrote a joint letter to Jacobs protesting the conditions in

Pretoria Local.

Another political prisoner was Stephen Tefu, a well-known communist trade unionist. Tefu was an irascible, brilliant man with a tongue that could strip the hide from a rhinoceros; he deferred to no one and sooner or later quarreled with everyone. He enjoyed deriding Sobukwe and Mandela, seeing them as celebrities who didn't deserve their prominence. Once, when Mandela told Sobukwe that the PAC slogan "Freedom in 1963" promised far too much and was thus dangerous, Tefu jumped in: "Bob, you know he is right. Bob, the people are waiting for you. They are going to kill you because you have deceived them. You are just an amateur, Bob. You are not a real politician." He liked to belittle Mandela, too: "Mandela is a little boy who is afraid of the white man. One morning, I woke up and found every newspaper saying, 'Mandela, Mandela, Mandela,' and I said to myself, 'Who is this Mandela?' I will tell you who Mandela is. He is a chap built up by you people for some reason I don't understand. That's who Mandela is."

Walter Sisulu joined them briefly. Sentenced to six years for incitement to strike, he was appealing to be released on bail during his appeal; after two weeks, bail was granted. The ANC told Sisulu to go underground to lead the struggle, and he did.

The world outside the prison was changing fast. The ANC had held its annual conference, meeting secretly over the border in Bechuanaland (now Botswana), and for the first time it acknowledged its link to MK, which it now called "the military wing of our struggle." The rival PAC had also developed a militant branch, Poqo (Xhosa for "standing alone"), which had surged over the line from sabotage to terrorism and was creating a backlash among more moderate allies in the cause.

The South African regime was striking back. Accelerating its program of "separate development" for blacks, Pretoria made the Transkei the first "self-governing homeland" in 1963. That triggered sabotage by MK and terrorism by Poqo, and in May justice minister John Vorster rammed through a Ninety-Day Detention Law, letting the police arrest anyone on suspicion of a political crime without a warrant. Habeas corpus was suspended, and people could be held for ninety days without being charged, given a lawyer, or tried. When the ninety days was up, as Vorster put it, jail time could be extended until "this side of eternity."

South Africa had become a police state, and, Mandela was to write, the "police became more savage; prisoners were routinely beaten, and we soon heard reports of electric shock, suffocation, and other forms of torture." People could be sentenced to death for sabotage or for "furthering the aims" of communism. Possession of a banned publication was a criminal offense, and nothing a banned person had ever said or written could be legally printed. Mandela's words were to be stifled forever. And when Robert Sobukwe's three-year sentence was over in May 1963, he was simply redetained without charges and shipped off to Robben Island, the windswept rock off the Cape Town coast that has served as a prison, a leper colony, and an insane asylum for 400 years.

That was to be Mandela's next stop, too. One night a guard came to his cell and told him to pack up; ten minutes later he and three other political prisoners, Tefu among them, were in a van, shackled together. Where were they going? Someplace beautiful, the guard said. "The island."

It was an ominous introduction. They were met at the landing by a group of burly guards, who yelled at them in Afrikaans: "This is the island! Here you will die!" The guards lined them up two by two and marched them toward the prison buildings, ordering them to jog. "*Haas! Haas!*" – "Move" – they yelled, as if the prisoners were cattle.

Mandela, in front with Tefu, muttered to him that they must resist now or forever be bullied. Tefu nodded, and they actually slowed down. "Look, man, we will kill you," said one guard, whom they later learned was a notorious sadist named Kleynhans. "This is the last warning. *Haas! Haas!*" But the prisoners plodded on, and no one hurt them. In a room with a floor submerged water, they were told to strip; the guards inspected each garment, threw it into the water, and then told the four to put their soaking clothes back on.

Two officers came in and started berating them for having long hair. When Mandela replied that they had broken no rule, the officer advanced threateningly, saying, "Never talk to me that way, boy!" Mandela told him, "If you so much as lay a hand on me, I will take you to the highest court in the land, and when I finish with you, you will be poor as a church mouse." That was not so much bravery as bravado, Mandela wrote in his autobiography: "I had been afraid. At such times, one must put up a bold front."

The officer was astonished – and by now a bit nervous. He looked at their papers and found out who they were and assigned them to a single large cell, "the best I had ever seen," with large windows and its own showers and toilets. The other three prisoners went to sleep, and Mandela was lying on his blanket on the floor when he heard tapping at the window. A guard whispered, "Nelson, come here." Intrigued, Mandela went to the window. The guard, a Coloured man, gave him tobacco and sandwiches for the group and repeated his visit nearly every night for two weeks.

At first the four were kept in their cell, but when they demanded to work like other prisoners, the guard Kleynhans took them out to cover newly laid pipe. He demanded they work faster each day, until Steve Tefu provided the next lesson in resistance, simply laying down his shovel. When Kleynhans threatened him, Tefu erupted in impeccable Afrikaans: "You ignoramus, who cannot even speak your own language properly – you cannot tell me what to do. I will work at my own rate. That is what I am prepared to do, and that is all I can do." He picked up his shovel and went back to work, with deliberation. Kleynhans must have been warned to go easy with these prisoners; despite his reputation for brutality, he never touched them, and once, when his equally notorious younger brother seemed about to assault Mandela, the older Kleynhans restrained him.

After two weeks, Mandela's cellmates were taken away. He was alone and a bit nervous, realizing that there would be no witnesses to his treatment. But the next morning he was taken back to Pretoria and put in solitary confinement. By

now, however, he was a seasoned prisoner and resourceful; he was soon getting secret messages from other ANC prisoners.

He quickly learned why he was back in Pretoria. The ANC had suffered a catastrophic setback: In a raid on Liliesleaf Farm in Rivonia, the police had captured nearly the entire High Command of *Umkhonto we Sizwe*, along with hundreds of photos, maps, and documents, including a detailed plan for guerrilla warfare in South Africa. They were all held under the Ninety-Day Detention Law, and all of them – Mandela included – were charged with sabotage. Prosecutors told the defendants' lawyers, headed by Bram Fischer, that they would ask for the death penalty.

5

“LIFE! TO LIVE!”

On October 9, 1963, the first day of the trial, Fischer asked for time to prepare the defense case. The eleven defendants were charged with more than 200 acts of sabotage to promote revolution and with conspiring to overthrow the government. The prosecutors withheld details of the charges until that morning, while many of the defendants, including Mandela, had been in and out of solitary confinement for months and unable to confer with their lawyers. As a convict, Mandela was forced to come to court in his prison clothing; he had lost twenty-five pounds and looked haggard and worn. Winnie wasn't there to see his plight. She had been charged with violating a banning order and was denied permission to attend the trial.

Judge [Quartus de Wet](#) granted Fischer a three-week delay, and by then the defense was in much better shape. The prisoners were in better health and were permitted to wear their own clothes. The government allowed Winnie to come to court provided she didn't wear her Xhosa dress. But the case was still highly dangerous. The state had chosen to try them for sabotage rather than treason for a reason: Treason required a long preliminary hearing, which aided the defense because the charge must be proven beyond a reasonable doubt, with two witnesses to testify to every charge. Under Henrik Vorster's 1962 Sabotage Act, lawyers for the defense had to prove their clients innocence. If convicted, the maximum penalty was death.

When the trial resumed, Fischer promptly attacked the indictment as shoddy, badly drawn, and full of inconsistencies. Mandela was accused of committing sabotage on days when he had been in prison. When chief prosecutor Percy Yutar answered Fischer with what the judge dismissed as a "political speech," de Wet quashed the indictment.

The prisoners were free – until the police immediately rearrested them on a new charge of sabotage and took them back to their cells. The state drew up a new indictment, and a new trial began in December.

Again, the defense strategy was to put the state and apartheid on trial. Each defendant, on entering his plea, gave a variation of Mandela's statement: "My Lord, it is not I, but the government that should be in the dock. I plead not guilty."

Yutar opened with a long, detailed narrative of the ANC's underground operation, saying its policy of violence progressed through sabotage and guerrilla warfare to a planned armed invasion of the country by foreign military units – a threat that was wholly imaginary. He described the recruiting of MK soldiers, the fundraising abroad, the production of bombs, and 222 acts of sabotage.

Over the next three months, the state called 173 witnesses and entered thousands of pieces of evidence, ranging from maps and blueprints to a note Mandela had written discussing the ANC plan for his escape from Pretoria Local. The star witness was a turncoat MK saboteur, Bruno Mtolo, who testified impressively but embellished his evidence with phony details that linked ANC and MK to the Communist Party.

When the police raided Rivonia, the Johannesburg suburb where the ANC met secretly, the High Command literally had a detailed plan of action on the table; this was the heart of the prosecutors' case. Yutar said Operation Mayibuye had been approved as MK's next plan. The defense argued that it was a draft that hadn't even been seen by ANC President Luthuli. In either case, the plan was a clear indication of intent. It detailed the landing of guerrilla forces in four different locations, to be reinforced by 7,000 MK recruits attacking selected targets – hopefully sparking a mass armed uprising against the government.

When it came time to present the defense case, the prisoners hewed to their strategy: They would use the trial to underscore their beliefs, defending themselves morally more so than legally. They would admit undisputed facts, including acts of sabotage, but they would deny murder, guerrilla war, or planning the invasion of South Africa by foreign forces.

As the first defense witness, Mandela would set the tone. But rather than testify and submit to cross-examination, he would make a statement – a more dramatic but less legally telling tactic. His fellow defendants approved of his intended statement, but when he showed it to Bram Fischer, the lawyer told him it would spell suicide for his case and begged him to tone it down. Mandela said he would probably be hanged anyway and might as well say what he believed.

Mandela spoke. He conceded that after of years of tyranny, exploitation, and oppression of his people he had turned from non-violence to sabotage. If sabotage failed to change the government's policies, the ANC had to be prepared for guerrilla war. Yes, he said, the ANC had often cooperated with the Communist Party, but its goals were vastly different, and the ANC's Freedom Charter sought no part of a socialist state.

Mandela went on to spell out the wrenching, glaring contrasts between black and white lives in South Africa and called for equal political rights for all to redress the evils of apartheid. After four hours on the stand, he put down his papers, turned to the judge and spoke the conclusion from memory: "During my lifetime I have dedicated myself to this struggle of the African people. I have fought against white domination, and I have fought against black domination. I have cherished the ideal of a democratic and free society in which all persons live together in harmony and with equal opportunities. It is an ideal which I hope to live for and to achieve. But if needs be, it is an ideal for which I am prepared to die."

There was a deep, collective sigh and a loud murmur in the courtroom. To dampen the impact, the judge called the next witness. But Mandela's statement was indelibly impressed on the spectators and the press. It was widely reported both in South Africa and abroad, despite the fact that Mandela was a banned person whose words were forbidden to be printed; the *Rand Daily Mail* published it nearly intact.

Beginning with Walter Sisulu and [Govan Mbeki](#), members of the MK High Command and other defendants testified and

were cross-examined, admitting to varying degrees of guilt. [Ahmed Kathrada](#), an Indian leader and a friend of Mandela's from his early days in Johannesburg, denied any acts of sabotage, but he said he supported them if they would aid the struggle. [Dennis Goldberg](#), a white engineer and a member of the Congress of Democrats, had not taken part in the MK operation. Other defendants, including [Raymond Mhlaba](#), a leader in both the ANC and MK, had fought, but the state had little evidence against them. Two men, [Elias Motsoaledi](#) and Andrew Mlangeni, told the court they had been tortured while in prison, and Mlangeni admitted that he had carried messages for MK.

In the three weeks in which Judge de Wet pondered his decision, there were night-long vigils for the defendants at St. Paul's Cathedral in London. Two days before judgment was due, the United Nations Security Council passed a resolution urging the South African government to end the trial and grant the defendants amnesty. Mandela, who continued to study for a law degree during breaks in the trial, wrote papers for a set of exams from the University of London and passed them.

De Wet found the eight principal defendants guilty on all counts. One, Ahmed Kathrada, was convicted on just one count, while Rusty Bernstein, who had simply helped erect a radio antenna at Liliesleaf Farm, was acquitted and freed. De Wet postponed the sentencing until the following day, but on the night of the verdict, the remaining defendants agreed that no matter the decision, they would not appeal and undermine their moral stance. Their lawyers were appalled.

At the sentencing on June 12, 1964, Judge de Wet was pale and nervous. He barely listened as noted author [Alan Paton](#) and Harold Hansen, president of the Liberal party, asked the court for clemency. In a barely audible voice, de Wet read his sentence. The crime of conspiracy, he said, is in essence treason, but the state had chosen not to bring that charge; therefore, he would not impose the supreme penalty. He sentenced them all to life in prison.

Pandemonium erupted in the courtroom. Dennis Goldberg's wife, who had not heard the judge, called out to him, "Dennis, what is it?"

"Life!" he called back, grinning. "Life! To Live!"

Robben Island had changed since Mandela's first, brief stay in 1962. Then there had been few prisoners, and it had seemed almost like an experiment. Now it was a hardened place, a grim world set apart from humanity. The guards were all white Afrikaners; the prisoners were all Coloured or black. Dennis Goldberg, the one white Rivonian convict, had been sent elsewhere. The other seven – Mandela, Sisulu, Ahmed Kathrada, Govan Mbeki, Raymond Mhlaba, Andrew Mlangeni, and Elias Motsoaledi – were flown to the island.

There was a new cell block for the political prisoners, designed to segregate them from other criminals and prevent them from spreading their ideological poison. While the general prisoners toiled in the island's rock quarry, the political inmates worked at their own hard labor. Every day in their first weeks, stones the size of volleyballs were dumped in the courtyard of their cellblock. Sitting cross-legged on the ground in rows, with guards standing over them, the prisoners crushed the stones into gravel with heavy hammers while wearing makeshift wire masks to protect their eyes from flying chips. It was winter in South Africa, and they had only thin canvas jackets. The work was strenuous enough to make all their muscles ache, but not vigorous enough to keep them warm.

The gravel they produced was thrown into an enormous bin. In their first week of breaking rocks, they were told it would have to be half-full by the end of the week, and they made that quota. The next week's goal was three-quarters of a bin, and the third week they had to fill the whole bin. The prisoners did it, but rebelled. The next week they slowed to half their previous pace. They got away with it. The guards threatened them, but did nothing.

The guards had changed, too. The Coloured warders who had offered Mandela sandwiches and sympathy were gone, but so were the Kleynhans brothers. The guards were now impassively brutal rather than sadistic. They insisted the prisoners call them *Baas*, but the Rivonia men refused. It was a constant source of friction.

Prison, Mandela wrote, is designed to break the prisoners' spirit, steal their dignity, and deprive them of purpose. Time goes so slowly that hours seem like days, but all the days are alike, so years can slip past almost unnoticed. One of the first things he did was draw a calendar on the wall of his cell. He could not stop fighting inside prison just as he had fought outside: "I would simply have to fight on different terms." He would never give up his faith that one day he would again be a free man.

New prisoners were allowed one visitor and one letter every six months, and the letters were often so heavily censored that they were all but unreadable. Mandela had been on Robben Island for less than three months when he was told that a visitor was coming the next day. The face on the other side of the glass was Winnie's, but she was under heavy strain: She had received a second banning order and had lost her social worker's job again as a result. Five warders stood over them, enforcing the order that they could talk only about family matters. The conversation was awkward and stilted. The thirty-minute time limit was up in a moment. It would be two years before he would see her again.

One morning, instead of breaking rocks in the courtyard, the prisoners were loaded into a truck and driven to the island's lime quarry. In the summer heat and the blinding glare of sunlight on the white rock, they used picks to break through rock to the seams of lime and shovels to dig it out and heap it into piles. It was exhausting, dusty work that blistered their hands and made them ache all over. After scrubbing down and eating their meager supper, they would fall into bed at 4:30 in the afternoon. But Mandela preferred it to breaking rocks. It was outdoor work, with a view of grass and trees, wind blowing, and birds flying overhead; it felt good to use all his muscles. Soon they were walking to the quarry rather than being driven in the truck, and that felt good, too, with an occasional glimpse of a kudu or springbok in the distance, a vision of freedom.

Walking to and from the quarry, they could see the small white house where Robert Sobukwe was kept. He was being held without charges in legal limbo after his sentence was served. Sometimes they got a glimpse of him working in his garden – a symbol of the lawless police state that South Africa had become.

The work was arduous, the food was mealie pap with an occasional withered vegetable or chunk of gristle, and they had to devise ways to whisper or signal to each other. But what they missed most apart from their families was word from the outside world. News of any kind was strictly forbidden.

One benefit of working in the quarry was that the guards often brought their lunch wrapped in newspapers. If the prisoners could distract them, they could filch the discarded papers from the trash and slip them into their shirts. It was too risky to share the actual papers with each other, but a prisoner could scribble brief summaries of each article on scraps of paper and pass them around.

One day Mandela saw that a guard had left a complete newspaper on a bench in their cellblock. He looked in all directions, snapped it up, and took it back to his cell. Incautiously, he read greedily and was instantly engrossed. Guards caught him reading the contraband, and he was given three days in solitary confinement.

A prisoner in solitary received no company, got no exercise, and was only fed water in which rice had been boiled. It was common punishment, meted out for any sign of defiance or rebellion, even for something as trivial as failing to stand up when a guard entered the room. The worst of it, according to Mandela, was when his mind began playing tricks and he couldn't tell fantasy from reality.

But conditions on Robben Island slowly improved. After a few months, the Rivonia prisoners were given permission to take correspondence courses. There was some argument over whether they should do that; some said that study should not be a privilege but an unrestrained right. Mandela agreed, but noted that as political prisoners and freedom fighters, they had a duty to improve themselves. As usual, however, conditions made study difficult. They had to pay for books and tuition; subjects including politics and military history were forbidden; and they couldn't lend each other books. In addition, many of the books assigned to Mandela by the University of London were deemed unsuitable and banned by prison authorities. When he did order a book from a library, it frequently took so long to arrive in the mail and make its way past the censors that it would be overdue before he got it – and the warders would send it back without even showing it to him. Then he had to pay the fine.

Regardless, they were allowed to learn. The authorities made that concession because, after the Rivonia trial, they thought they had won, but later they came to regret it. And the privileges didn't stop there. When the prisoners asked for desks and chairs, the warders built sloping, stand-up desks into the walls of their cells. In time, however, the desks were lowered, and they were given three-legged stools to sit on.

Gradually, the warders softened. One quarry guard was especially troublesome, preventing discussion by enforcing the no-talking rule and being hostile in general. Mandela assigned a prisoner to befriend the man. One day the guard asked to borrow the prisoner's jacket to sit on, and the prisoner gave it to him. In return, the guard threw a sandwich on the grass. Mandela signaled the prisoner to pick it up, and though he winced at being treated like a dog, he complied. Soon the guard was asking questions about the ANC. When he learned the ANC's goals – equal rights, a non-racial society, and the redistribution of wealth – he scratched his head and said, "It makes more bloody sense than the Nats."

Communication was a problem, particularly between sections of the prison. With Mandela as their informal leader and spokesman, the Rivonia men felt obligated to stay in touch with the general prisoners and do what they could to help indoctrinate them. They collected empty match boxes discarded by the warders, then wrote and hid messages under false bottoms in the boxes. On the morning walk to the lime quarry, they left their boxes at the junction where their trail met the route the general prisoners took to the rock quarry. They received replies the same way.

The kitchen manned by prisoners from the general section proved a more reliable method of communication. The politicals hid messages wrapped in plastic in the dirty dishes they sent back to the kitchen, and the general prisoners replied with plastic-wrapped notes at the bottom of the mealie-pap pans. Other messages were taped below the rims of the toilets in the political section, which were used by general prisoners who had been sent to the isolation cells.

Messages with the outside world were more difficult. Prisoners who left the island after their sentences were finished smuggled letters out, and visitors received forbidden information in coded conversation in spite of the hovering warders. It was easier when the visitor was a prisoner's lawyer. Guards were not allowed to listen in, and the lawyers were not searched, so they could carry letters to be mailed. Mandela could defeat the bugs in the visiting rooms by saying to his lawyer, "Please tell," then writing "O.T." for Oliver Tambo on a scrap of paper, then saying "that we approve of his plan to reduce the size of the" and writing "National Executive." It was cumbersome, but it worked. When they were consulting their lawyers, prisoners weren't bound by a thirty-minute time limit.

A message in a mealie pap pan told the politicals one day in 1966 that the general prisoners were waging a hunger strike. The reasons weren't clear, but the Rivonia men decided to back up their fellow prisoners by joining in. When they began refusing meals, the authorities tempted them with special treats – porridge gleaming with fat, mealie pap studded with vegetables and chunks of juicy meat. They refused to eat.

Colonel F.C. Wessels, Robben Island's commanding officer, tried to persuade Mandela to call off the strike. When Wessels pointed out that the politicals weren't even aware of what they were protesting, Mandela said it didn't matter; the general prisoners were their brothers in the struggle.

Then came an extraordinary development: The guards went on hunger strike, too – not in solidarity with the prisoners, but to demand better food and living conditions. An overwhelmed Wessels gave in to the warders and began

negotiations with the general prisoners to improve their conditions. The strike ended.

Relations with the general prisoners weren't always smooth. At one point, prison authorities placed hardened criminal gang members in the political cellblock to harass and torment the ANC members. Sisulu was so intimidated by the scar-faced thug across the corridor from him that he gave the man his breakfast each morning. But Mandela saw the newcomers as raw material for conversion, and at least one of them ultimately joined the ANC and proved to be expert at smuggling materials in and out of the prison.

Early on, the Rivonia men were joined by a batch of new political prisoners, members of the ANC's MK militant wing who had been caught in acts of sabotage. Among them was Wilton Mkwayi, the treason trial defendant who had walked off when the guard told him to leave. Mkwayi had gone underground, taken military training in Ethiopia, and become MK's commander in chief after the Rivonia trial.

Also in the prison – some in the political cellblock, others in the general sections – were a number of men from the Pan-Africanist Congress. Mandela worked hard to mend the men's differences and occasionally made some progress; but the PAC men were prickly, resenting the ANC's superior organization and Mandela's prominence. Less informed than the ANC members about outside developments, they refused to believe that their own organization had given up its exclusive Africanist policy and now welcomed whites and Indians as members and even had a white executive board member. The rivalry between the two groups was as intense on the island as it was outside.

The prisoners' thirst for news was at least partly quenched. [Mac Maharaj](#), one of the MK newcomers, had been asked by a guard to help him write an essay for a contest in exchange for a package of cigarettes. Maharaj complied, but blackmailed the guard by telling him he had his fingerprints on the package and could prove he had been breaking the rules by giving cigarettes to prisoners. The guard, afraid of losing his pension, brought Maharaj a newspaper every day, and Maharaj wrote summaries of the articles and passed them around.

Much of the news from outside in those early years was bleak. In the wake of the Rivonia trial, the ANC was shattered, with nearly all the senior leaders in jail or in exile. Its underground structure had been destroyed. Oliver Tambo tried to raise funds, create bridges to outside organizations, and arrange military training for MK. But now he had to try to restore the underground forces in South Africa as well. But the enemy had grown stronger: The police were more powerful and more ruthless, bolstered by draconian new laws. ANC president Luthuli died in 1967, hit by a train as he walked near his home, and was replaced by Tambo, who now ran the whole organization from Lusaka, Zambia.

The best news was that the struggle for freedom was engaged throughout southern Africa. As its former commander, Mandela was proud that MK had fought in battles in Zimbabwe (then Rhodesia) and Botswana (Bechuanaland). But although the men fought bravely and well, they were defeated.

Mandela's personal news was sad as well. His mother managed to visit him once, in 1968, accompanied by his son Makgatho, his daughter Makaziwe, and his sister. (Because there were four visitors, the prison had extended the time limit from half an hour to forty-five minutes. His mother looked old and haggard, and only weeks after the visit Makgatho wired that she had died of a heart attack. Worse, a terse telegram from Makgatho informed Mandela that his older son, Madiba, had been killed in an auto accident in July 1969. Mandela went to his cell and lay on his bed for hours; when Sisulu came in, Mandela handed him the telegram. Sisulu silently took his hand. "I do not know how long he remained with me," Mandela wrote. "There is nothing that one man can say to another at such a time." He was not allowed to attend either funeral.

It was also in 1969 that the authorities began to ruthlessly persecute Mandela's wife. Winnie had been allowed only two visits with him, in 1964 and again in 1966. Three years later, she was living in their home in the Orlando district of Soweto when security police raided the house under the new 1967 Terrorism Act. She was taken away, with her two daughters clinging to her skirts, and held for months in solitary confinement while being interrogated brutally and relentlessly. It was six months before she and twenty-two others, also arrested that day in a nationwide crackdown, were charged with trying to revive the ANC. The case dragged on for another year before the state dropped the charges. But two weeks after her release, she was banned again and placed under house arrest.

Mandela often told fellow prisoners not to worry about things they had no control over, but he couldn't take his own advice. He spent many sleepless nights imagining Winnie in prison and wondering what the police were doing to her. As a special favor, prison authorities allowed him to send a few letters to Winnie and receive replies. But that wasn't out of altruism, he knew: "They were reading our letters, hoping to glean some information that would assist their case against Winnie." To deepen his torment, the guards would leave newspaper clippings on his bed about Winnie's case.

6

“IT’S A TRAP”

Over the years, life for prisoners on Robben Island slowly became more bearable. Progress was never a straight line; it was an endless zigzag of small battles - a concession that had taken years to win might be revoked in a week. But the overall trend line was positive. By 1970, seven years after the Rivonia men first arrived, the accumulated changes were significant.

They wore long trousers now. Uniforms actually fitted them, and they were allowed to wash them themselves. They were permitted in the courtyard all weekend. The food was never good and still inferior to what was given the Indian and Coloured men, but now it sometimes included bread, and they were permitted to share meals instead of being restricted to individual rations. They played cards and board games, and they organized chess, draughts (checkers), and Scrabble tournaments. Visiting ministers preached every Sunday, and the prisoners no longer had to listen from their cells, but could attend services in the open air. At Christmas, they were permitted to put on concerts and even were allowed to mount an annual drama. One year, Mandela played Creon, the king of Thebes, in Sophocles' *Antigone*.

But the biggest freedom was that prisoners were allowed to associate freely with each other. The no-conversation rule withered away until they could talk at meals or in the courtyard. They elected Mandela to head a three-man High Organ of the ANC to govern their behavior in prison, and they held general ANC meetings - inconspicuously, of course.

At the lime quarry, the prisoners wore sunglasses to block the glare, and production quotas were virtually nonexistent. Once, when storms had lashed the island, the head guard at the quarry approached the prisoners and said, "Gentlemen, the rains have washed away the lines on the roads. We need twenty kilos of lime today. Can you help?" Since he treated them as human beings, they obliged. The prisoners did much more talking than digging, however; the quarry was the scene of endless debates, about everything from ANC strategy and tactics to the health benefits of circumcision and whether tigers are indigenous to Africa.

The tiger discussion went on for years. The conventional view was that tigers came from Asia. Mandela held that there is a word for tiger in the Xhosa language, separate from the names for lion and leopard, so it's likely that tigers once lived in Africa: Why would there be a name for something that didn't exist? But Mac Maharaj disagreed. There was a Hindi word hundreds of years ago for craft that flew in the air, he said, but that didn't mean the ancient Indians had airplanes. The men educated each other through their debates, discussed their own and the ANC's mistakes, and matured their thinking. There's only one good thing about prison, Mandela once said: There is time to reflect. He and his colleagues used their time in the quarry to good advantage.

The prisoners even began to converse with their warders. Mandela never initiated these discussions, but if a guard said something like, "All right, Mandela, what is it you really want?" he took it as a sign that the man was genuinely curious and might be open to learning something. Mandela would then try to explain the ANC's goals and policies. Some guards responded and treated the prisoners with more respect and consideration.

But the prison's long, slow thaw abruptly ended in 1970, when the authorities decided it had gone too far and sent in a new commander, Piet Badenhorst, to restore discipline.

As he had done with previous incoming commanders, Mandela requested a meeting with Badenhorst to educate him about the ANC and to assess his character. Badenhorst refused and immediately rescinded every privilege the prisoners had won and announced he would enforce every rule on the books, adding more as he saw fit. Cells were raided and searched. Meals were suspended without warning or cause. Complaints were ignored. Prisoners who asked to see their lawyers were sent to solitary.

When Badenhorst arrived at the quarry in his car at the end of his first week, the men paused to look at him. Staring straight at Mandela, the commander called out: "*Mandela, Jy moet jou vinger uit jou got trek*" - "you must pull your finger out of your ass." Angry, Mandela walked toward the car, and Badenhorst drove away. The prisoners were then trucked back to the cellblock and made to stand at attention in the courtyard, where the commander told them he was disgusted by their laziness and was reducing their official classifications, meaning that their study privileges would be revoked.

It got worse, with routine harassments, punishments, and the kind of brutal behavior typified by the midnight rousting from their cells. Only after the prisoners smuggled out messages describing the new regime to supporters (including [Helen Suzman](#), a Liberal Party member of Parliament) that three judges were sent to Robben Island to see for themselves what was going on. Mandela was able to bait Badenhorst into openly threatening him in front of the inspectors. It took three more months before Badenhorst was transferred off the island. But he eased up considerably before he left and parted with his astonishing valedictory to Mandela: "I just want to wish you people good luck." That cemented Mandela's conviction that no man, however barbaric he may seem, is immune to a spark of decency.

The next commanding officer, General W.H. Willemse, granted Mandela's request for an interview and proved courteous and reasonable. Conditions on the island quickly reverted to their pre-Badenhorst state. But a few weeks later, Willemse called Mandela in for another chat.

"Mandela, you must help me," he said. "Your men are not working. They don't listen to orders. They do only what they want to do. This is a prison. There must be some discipline." It would be in the prisoners' own interest to shape up a little, he argued: "We must have some order or they will bring back someone like the previous head of prison." Mandela conceded, and his men agreed; in the quarry, they worked - but at their own pace. It was enough.

The work changed a few weeks later, when the prisoners were loaded into a truck and driven to the beach to collect long, heavy strands of seaweed to be processed into fertilizer. It was literally a day at the beach - sun and wind, the waves sparkling, and seals and penguins frolicking in the water. They went to the beach for a few days at a time between stints in the quarry; it could be agonizingly cold in the winter, wading into the waves and hauling back thirty-

pound fronds of seaweed, but the eating was always fine. They gathered clams, mussels, abalone, and crayfish and cooked a seafood stew over a driftwood fire. The guards would join them for a picnic lunch.

By 1976, the prisoners no longer pretended to work in the quarry. They openly demanded the end of manual labor and the right to do something constructive, such as studying or learning a trade. Early in 1977, the authorities consented to let the prisoners spend the entire day in the cellblock, with only token chores in the courtyard.

Mandela spent his time reading, writing letters, working on legal briefs, or talking with his ANC colleagues. He played tennis for exercise, and the commander let him plant a vegetable garden in the courtyard. He ordered books on gardening and horticulture and enjoyed the satisfaction of helping the plants grow. With the end of quarry work – and the twice-daily walk to and fro – he found himself gaining weight and resumed the kind of exercise he learned as a boxer: calisthenics and running in place. His routine was formidable for a man in his fifties – fifty deep knee-bends, 200 sit-ups, and 100 fingertip push-ups, four days a week.

At Walter Sisulu's suggestion, Mandela began to write his memoirs, which Sisulu said could be published to coincide with his sixtieth birthday, now only three years away. He finished a draft in just four months, edited by Sisulu and Ahmed Kathrada; the manuscript was copied in minuscule writing and hidden in a notebook binding – when Mac Maharaj was released, he smuggled it out to Oliver Tambo in Lusaka. For reasons Mandela never learned, Tambo didn't get it published. The manuscript later served as the basis for the first half of Mandela's autobiography.

Perhaps the most surprising concession to the prisoners was the Robben Island cinema. There were movies nearly every week, shown at first on a bed sheet and later on a real movie screen set up in a large room in the cellblock. They began with old Hollywood action films and westerns; one of the first shown was *The Mark of Zorro*, made in 1920 with Douglas Fairbanks as the hero. Later films included *The Ten Commandments*, *The King and I*, and *Cleopatra*, with Elizabeth Taylor and Richard Burton.

A documentary on the Hell's Angels motorcycle gang stirred up a political debate among the prisoners. The film portrayed the bikers as violent and antisocial, while the police were depicted as the good guys. In the discussion, most of the prisoners came down against the Hell's Angels. But a younger MK man defended the Angels, arguing that they were rebelling against the authorities, just as MK and the ANC were doing. He accused the older men of being middle-class intellectuals who identified with the authorities. Many in the group attacked him, saying it was insulting to compare the ANC with a bunch of amoral sociopaths. But after much thought, Mandela concluded that the younger man was right.

Robben Island became known as "the university," not because of what the prisoners learned from books or even because men like Ahmed Kathrada earned multiple degrees while there, but because of what they learned from each other. They were their own faculty, specializing in political studies.

It began when young MK members arriving on the island turned out to know hardly anything about the ANC and its history. Sisulu remedied the situation with informal lectures that evolved into a two-year course on the ANC and the liberation struggle in general, with added classes on the history of the Indian and Coloured struggles. Prisoners in the general section became interested, and a correspondence course of sorts developed, with lectures and questions smuggled through the kitchen conduit.

Mandela himself taught a course in political economy for several years. But he was spending more time each year on legal work, preparing appeals for other prisoners and even helping guards with legal problems. It was a great satisfaction, he said, when he could find flaws in the trial of a prisoner who had had no legal representation; in such cases, he felt he had made an impact on the whole callous system.

Throughout the years, Mandela never stopped thinking about the possibility of escape. It was a political prisoner's duty to try to escape, and his reputation as the Black Pimpernel to think about. Mac Maharaj and Eddie Daniels, both resourceful and ingenious, were good at improvising plans, though most of them were far too dangerous to attempt. Jeff Masemola, equally resourceful, managed to filch a guard's key long enough to use it to make a master key that opened most of the doors in the cellblock, which seemed like a promising beginning. But that wouldn't bridge the ocean that surrounded Robben Island.

In 1969, one new young guard seemed especially eager to get to know Mandela. Rumor had it that Mandela's friends on the outside were planning his escape, and the young guard let him know that he was in on the plot. The plan, however, seemed far-fetched. The guard intended to drug the men on duty at the lighthouse one night so that a small boat could land on the beach. The guard would give Mandela a key to his cell so he could meet the boat. On the way to Cape Town, his rescuers would supply underwater diving gear so he could swim into the harbor, where he would be taken to a local airport and flown out of the country.

Mandela consulted Walter Sisulu, and they agreed the guard wasn't to be trusted. Mandela remained noncommittal, and the man soon left the island. Mandela later learned that he was an agent of the Bureau of State Security (BOSS), South Africa's secret intelligence agency. If Mandela had gone along with the plan, and in the unlikely event that he had managed to use SCUBA equipment for the first time to swim through the harbor in the dark, he would have been killed in a shootout at the airport. Even the rumors Mandela had heard about ANC plans for his escape were part of the BOSS plot.

Mac Maharaj came up with a more promising scheme. He had visited the prison's dentist in Cape Town and found the man – related by marriage to a political prisoner – so sympathetic that he insisted the prisoners' leg irons be removed before he treated them. Additionally, it was a short drop from the dentist's window in the second-floor waiting room to a small side street, where escapees could vanish into the crowds.

Mandela, Maharaj, and Wilton Mkwayi made appointments with the dentist. They agreed to make a break as soon as their leg irons were taken off, and Maharaj brought along a knife that he was prepared to use. But a fourth prisoner was scheduled for the dentist that day, and when the three told him about the plan, he refused to join the escape. They doubted his loyalty, and it worried Mandela that he knew about the plot.

In the dentist's waiting room, the leg irons came off, and the prisoners went to the window. But something was odd: In the middle of the day, the street in the heart of Cape Town, which had been filled with traffic on Maharaj's previous visit, was deserted. "It's a trap," said Maharaj, and Mandela agreed. "You're losing your nerve," said Mkwayi. But Mandela and Maharaj vetoed the escape, and they ended up simply getting their teeth examined.

Eddie Daniels came up with the most ingenious escape plan after noticing that in addition to the airplanes that flew over the island, helicopters were frequently seen on their way to and from tankers off the coast. Daniels suggested that a helicopter painted in South African military colors could pluck Mandela from the island and leave him on the roof of a friendly foreign embassy in Cape Town, where he could ask asylum. Mandela thought it might work and told Daniels to smuggle the suggestion to Oliver Tambo in Lusaka. Tambo never responded.

For Mandela, the Robben years were also plagued with constant worries about his wife. In 1972, security police kicked down the door of their home in Soweto. Bricks were thrown through the window, and gunshots were fired at the front door, presumably by henchmen of the police. In 1974, Winnie was charged with violating her banning orders, which forbade her to have any visitors except her children and her doctor. Mandela and Winnie had decided to send their daughters Zenani and Zindzi to boarding school in Swaziland to spare them from the harassment that was Winnie's periodic fate, but when they were on holiday, they counted as visitors. Winnie was working at a lawyer's office in 1974, and a friend brought the girls to see her on her lunch hour. She was charged with violating the rules and sentenced to six months in prison.

Luckily, she was sent to a relatively benign jail where her experience was less horrific than her previous solitary confinement in Pretoria. She wrote Mandela that this jail time liberated her and renewed her commitment to the struggle. Ironically, Zeni and Zindzi were permitted to visit her there. When she was released, she managed to bring Zindzi to Robben Island to see her father. Zindzi was fifteen; he hadn't seen her in twelve years. It was a good visit, he wrote, but nowhere near long enough to bridge that gap.

Winnie's troubles were far from over. In June 1976, Soweto had erupted in an unlikely uprising: 15,000 schoolchildren gathered to protest the government's decree that half of all classes in secondary schools be taught in Afrikaans. A detachment of police opened fire on them, killing and wounding hundreds of children. The protesters fought back with sticks and stones. In response, riots and violence broke out across the country. Winnie joined the Black Parents Association, a group of professional men and church leaders supporting the students, and was jailed again for five months without charges.

She emerged from jail more committed than ever, newly banned but energized by Soweto's young radicals. Determined to neutralize her popularity and her impact on the students, the government sent her into internal exile. One morning in 1977, several police cars and a truck pulled up outside the Mandela home, and Winnie and all her belongings were packed up and taken to Brandfort, a desperately poor and backward black township 250 miles from Johannesburg, where she was dumped in front of a tin-roofed, three-room shack. She didn't even speak the local language.

Zindzi was living with Winnie now, and life was bleak. There was no heat, no toilet, and no running water in the house; there were no stores catering to black customers in the township. Winnie and Zindzi were under constant surveillance and occasionally harassed, with police officers invading the house and making threats. With her lawyers' help, Mandela filed a suit from prison, asking for a restraining order to stop the persecution. Winnie's energy and dedication won friends and neutralized the white farmers who set the tone in Brandfort. With the help of the national charity Operation Hunger, she helped feed the poor of the township. She started a nursery for the children and raised funds from her international supporters for a medical clinic, and now she had the backing even of some of the nearby white residents. Winnie was still in miserable circumstances in a remote and desolate place, but she had rebounded. Mandela was left to wonder: What would happen to her next?

He worried, too, about the marriage itself: Could it survive the strain of their long separation? He wrote Winnie two long letters about an especially lovely tomato plant that he had raised from a seedling to a splendid plant producing deep red fruit. For reasons he couldn't figure out, the plant began to wither; when it finally died, he washed the roots and buried them in a corner of his garden. He didn't know what Winnie read into the story, he wrote, but as for him, "I did not want our relationship to go the way of that plant, and yet I felt that I had been unable to nourish many of the most important relationships in my life. Sometimes there is nothing one can do to save something that must die." It was a sad but prescient insight.

Not all the family news was bad. Mandela's daughter Zeni had landed on her feet, high on a pedestal. She had married Prince Thumbumuzi, the son of the king of Swaziland, where Zeni had been in boarding school. The marriage gave her diplomatic privileges, including the right to visit Mandela almost at will, and Zeni and her prince brought their infant daughter in the winter of 1978 so Mandela could exercise the grandfather's privilege of choosing a name for the baby. Because the prince was along, they met in a consulting room instead of the usual visiting area separated by thick glass windows; Mandela embraced his daughter for the first time since she was a child, and he held his granddaughter in his lap the entire visit. He named her Zaziwe, meaning hope. "Hope never left me," he wrote, "and now it never would. I was convinced that this child would be part of a new generation of South Africans for whom apartheid would be a distant memory – that was my dream."

The slaughter of schoolchildren in Soweto re-energized the entire South African liberation struggle. All over the country,

young people were inflamed with protest and rebellion. Mass funerals for the victims of police violence turned into rallies, and students boycotted their schools. Hundreds of young men were arrested, and some turned up on Robben Island. They filled the isolation section next to the political cellblock, and whispered conversations across the corridor gave the Rivonia men their first full picture of what had happened.

Mandela and his fellow politicals were cheered. The ANC's MK military wing was also revitalized and stepped up its sabotage campaign, setting off weekly explosions at power plants, police stations, and other strategic sites across the country. Many of the newcomers to the island left the country for MK training at camps in Angola, Mozambique, and Tanzania, then returned to be arrested while fighting the regime. "There is nothing so encouraging in prison," Mandela wrote, "as learning that the people outside are supporting the cause for which you are inside."

The newcomers were different prisoners – fiercer, more aggressive, and more resolute than those before them. Robben Island was now the principal jail for political inmates, and the tide of Soweto-era prisoners soon displaced most of the criminal population and filled much of the general section of the prison.

The young rebels saw the Rivonia contingent as a set of worn-out, elderly moderates, too hesitant to assert themselves and too eager to cooperate with their jailers. "The authorities did not know how to handle them, and they turned the island upside down," Mandela said. The young radicals refused to obey even basic rules. Mandela saw one prisoner, no more than eighteen years old, wearing his cap and sitting down in the presence of prison officers – both violations. A major asked him to take off his cap. "What for?" the prisoner demanded. Nonplused, the major stomped out, saying, "Mandela, you talk to him." Mandela simply bowed to the young man, and walked out himself.

Most newcomers adhered to the Black Consciousness Movement, a philosophy that maintained that blacks could not achieve political liberation until they freed themselves from the sense of inferiority instilled by centuries of white rule. That was similar to what Mandela and his colleagues in the ANC Youth League had believed, and he sensed that given time, these young men would come to share the goals of the ANC. For now, however, he advised his colleagues not to jump any fences by trying to recruit the newcomers.

But they didn't wait to be recruited. [Patrick "Terror" Lekota](#), a leader of the South African Students Organization with a reputation for bravery, took the lead and publicly declared he would join the ANC. He was assaulted with a garden fork by some loyal BCM members, but after he refused to testify against them, dozens of the BCM contingent – including some of his assailants – followed him to the ANC. Lekota earned his nickname playing soccer, but he was just as effective in debate, and he soon became a leader in the island's ANC hierarchy.

Despite this success, the young rebels worried Mandela. Had he and his contemporaries become stuck in an elderly, passive mindset? He had been in prison for eighteen years now. Had his ideas become frozen in time while the world moved on?

He considered the question seriously and decided the answer was no. The Rivonia group's dialogue on the island had evolved and refined their ideas; if their principles were, indeed, basically the same as when they had arrived, "I was confident that the world was moving toward our position, not away from it." Proof of that movement was Lekota's and his comrades shift from the Africanism of the BCM to the ANC's inclusive goal of votes for all. When he was finally freed to rejoin the world, Mandela would not be a political fossil.

And the idea of freedom no longer seemed impossible. Mandela had become a symbol of the struggle, and his name was beginning to resonate. In 1979, he was honored with the [Jawaharlal Nehru](#) Human Rights Award in India; two years later, students at the University of London nominated him for the honorary post of university chancellor. About this same time the ANC decided that Mandela's name would personalize its efforts to free all its political prisoners. The campaign kicked off with a petition in the *Johannesburg Sunday Post* headlined, FREE MANDELA!

In fact, Mandela had been offered his freedom. In an unprecedented visit, South Africa's minister of prisons, [Jimmy Kruger](#), came to Robben Island in 1976 to talk to Mandela, who tried to educate him about the ANC but found him both uninformed and uninterested. When Mandela cited cases of Afrikaner rebels who had been released despite being convicted of high treason, Kruger brushed it aside as "ancient history." But Kruger made Mandela an offer: If Mandela would recognize the new Bantustan government of the Transkei and was willing to live there himself, his sentence would be dramatically reduced. Mandela told Kruger he rejected the Bantustan policy and would only consent to live in his home in Johannesburg. Kruger came back a month later with the same offer and got the same answer.

At the end of March 1982, Mandela had another highly unusual visitor: The island's current commanding officer actually came into his cell. "Mandela," he said, "I want you to pack up your things. We are transferring you."

Where, and why? Mandela asked.

He couldn't say, the commander said. Pretoria had told him only that Mandela was to be transferred off the island immediately. Then he went to the cells of Walter Sisulu, Raymond Mhlaba, and Andrew Mlangeni with the same message.

The four prisoners were given cardboard boxes for their belongings, and they filled them with everything they had accumulated in eighteen years on the island in little more than half an hour. There was no time for farewells with the men they were leaving behind, and within minutes they were on the ferry to Cape Town. Robben Island faded behind them in the twilight.

The island changed Mandela, and Richard Stengel, the *Time* magazine writer who helped Mandela shape his autobiography, says his experience there is the key to understanding him. "The man who walked onto Robben Island in

1964 was emotional, headstrong, easily stung,” Stengel wrote. “The man who emerged was balanced and disciplined.” That maturity would serve him – and his country – well.

Compared with the island, Pollsmoor Prison was a five-star hotel for Mandela and his companions. Their cell was a large, airy room, occupying fully 1,500 square feet of the third-floor penthouse of the prison. The bathroom had a toilet, a urinal, two washbasins, and two showers, and there were four beds, with sheets and blankets, luxurious for men who had spent eighteen years sleeping on thin mats on a stone floor. Outside was a huge L-shaped terrace, half as large as a soccer field, bounded by a white concrete wall that blocked their view of the Cape scenery except for a few ridges of the Constantiaberg Mountains.

Why had they been transferred? They speculated that the authorities wanted to weaken the ANC at Robben Island by removing its leaders, and Mandela, Sisulu, and Mhlaba were all members of the ANC High Organ on the island. Mlangeni had not been part of the leadership, but perhaps the prison officers hadn’t understood that. A few months later, that theory was reinforced when Ahmed Kathrada, another High Organ member, joined the Pollsmoor group.

Meals at Pollsmoor were feasts compared to the mealie-pap on Robben Island, with dinners of actual meat and vegetables, and they were allowed a radio and newspapers and magazines, including the American magazine *Time* and the London *Guardian Weekly*. Mandela was even given a study, a small cell with a desk, chair, and bookshelves.

He also had a luxuriant garden on the terrace, created from sixteen oil drums cut in half and filled with rich topsoil. They were akin to thirty-two giant flowerpots, and Mandela soon populated them with nearly 900 plants producing onions, tomatoes, peppers, eggplant, cabbages, and strawberries. Warders gave him seeds of vegetables they particularly liked, and the prison commander, Brigadier Munro, supplied him with carrot and broccoli seeds. Mandela sent a weekly supply of vegetables to the prison kitchen and gave much of the rest of his harvest to the guards.

Munro was “a decent, helpful man,” according to Mandela, and the prison allowed him “contact visits” with Winnie and his family. He was stunned on the first of these when a guard escorted Winnie into the room where he was waiting, and they were permitted to embrace and kiss for the first time in eighteen years. He hugged his daughter Zeni and held his granddaughter on his lap again.

In the outside world, the struggle was escalating. The South African Defense Force had launched a “total onslaught” to crush the ANC and MK, including a raid into Mozambique that killed thirteen people in the ANC office in Maputo. Another raid on an ANC office in Lesotho killed forty-two people, including a dozen women and children, and a letter bomb assassinated Ruth First, Joe Slovo’s wife, in her exile in Maputo.

In reprisal, MK planted bombs in an unfinished nuclear power plant near Cape Town and hit other military and apartheid targets. In its first car bomb attack, MK targeted a military intelligence office in Pretoria, killing nineteen people and injuring more than 200. Mandela felt “a profound horror” at this escalation and the deaths of civilians, but wrote that he was reconciled to the necessity: “It was precisely because we knew that such incidents would occur that our decision to take up arms had been so grave and reluctant.”

The regime was also trying to break up the Alliance Congress, dividing the blacks from their Indian and Coloured partners by making concessions to the lighter-skinned groups. [P.W. Botha](#), now South Africa’s president, passed a bill to create a tri-cameral Parliament giving Indian and Coloured voters a nominal voice in the government. It was a sham, of course, since any action of the new chambers might vote was subject to a white veto, and hardly anyone was fooled: Eighty percent of the eligible Indian and Coloured voters boycotted the first tri-cameral election in 1984.

On the liberal side, grassroots political movements were springing up to support the liberation struggle. One, the United Democratic Front, gathered more than 600 anti-apartheid organizations under its banner. Even though it had been banned for twenty-five years, the ANC ranked in opinion polls as the country’s most popular political organization. The struggle was winning the world’s attention and support. Governments around the world imposed economic sanctions on South Africa, and Archbishop [Desmond Tutu](#), the fearless Anglican denouncer of apartheid and the regime, was awarded the 1984 [Nobel Peace Prize](#).

The regime tried repeatedly to split Mandela from his followers. On several occasions, prison minister Kruger visited him to say, “Mandela, we can work with you, but not your colleagues. Be reasonable.” Mandela didn’t bite, but he did wonder if this was a preface to real negotiations. The new minister of justice, [Kobie Coetsee](#), approved visits to Mandela by two prominent foreigners: Lord [Nicholas Bethell](#), a member of Britain’s House of Lords and the new European Parliament, and [Samuel Dash](#), who had won fame as counsel to the U.S. Congressional [Watergate Committee](#) a decade before. Both were sympathetic when Mandela explained the ANC’s objectives.

Finally, in January of 1985, President Botha made a dramatic offer. On the floor of Parliament, he said that Mandela – and all political prisoners – could have their freedom as soon as they “unconditionally rejected violence as a political instrument.” He added, with a flourish, “It is therefore not the South African government which now stands in the way of Mr. Mandela’s freedom. It is he himself.”

Mandela was in a quandary. He had to respond, and his response had to make several important points: It must again justify the ANC’s use of violence, reassure his colleagues that he would not betray them, and subtly convey to the government that he thought negotiation was the only path to ending the struggle.

In February of 1985, Mandela’s daughter Zindzi read the statement he had written to a cheering crowd in a stadium in Soweto: “It was only . . . when all other forms of resistance were no longer open to us that we turned to armed struggle.” Mandela called on Botha to renounce the regime’s violence and free all political prisoners. As long as apartheid existed, he told the world, he could not be free. He concluded, “Only free men can negotiate. Prisoners

cannot enter into contracts . . . I cannot and will not give any undertaking at a time when I and you, the people, are not free. Your freedom and mine cannot be separated. I will return."

Soon after that, Mandela wrote Justice Minister Coetsee asking for a meeting to discuss talks between the ANC and the government. He did not reply. But several weeks later, when Mandela was in the hospital for surgery for an enlarged prostate, Coetsee turned up at his bedside. He was cordial and gracious, as if visiting an old friend; the subject of negotiations didn't come up. But Mandela decided that the visit was an olive branch, demonstrating the regime had concluded it must eventually reach some accommodation.

Mandela took the opportunity to broach a personal issue with Coetsee: the ongoing persecution of his wife. Winnie was allowed to leave her exile in Brandfort only to visit him or see her doctor in Johannesburg. On a recent medical trip, her shack in Brandfort had been firebombed and ruined, along with the clinic she had built behind it. With nowhere to live, she had stayed in Johannesburg. But a few weeks later, the security police told her the house had been repaired and ordered her to return. She refused, so far without reprisal. Now Mandela asked Coetsee to give Winnie permission to remain in the city. Coetsee said he couldn't promise, but he would see what he could do. There was no further message, but from then on Winnie lived at their home in Soweto.

When Mandela left the hospital, Brigadier Munro personally drove him back to prison – and casually told him he would have new quarters, away from his friends. The new cell consisted of three rooms on the ground floor, luxurious by prison standards but damp and musty, with little natural light. Pondering the implications, Mandela decided it was an opportunity to begin negotiations. The long struggle seemed to have reached a pivotal point. If they didn't start talking soon, the only outcome would be more and more suffering – as he said in his book, "Both sides would soon be plunged into a dark night of oppression, violence, and war." His solitude gave him the freedom to explore alternatives privately, with no one watching.

He sensed that the government knew that, for all its power, it was on the wrong side of history and that sooner or later apartheid must end. The previous year, the great novelist Alan Paton, author of *Cry, the Beloved Country* and the most prominent voice of the nation's liberals, summed it up neatly: "For many generations the white people of South Africa have been riding a tiger. Now the tiger is getting stronger and stronger, and the rider is getting older and weaker. He'd like to get off." The problem was how to do it.

For its part, the ANC realized that a military victory was nothing but a distant dream. Yet both sides saw negotiations as a betrayal of principle and a sign of weakness; neither felt it could come to the table without major concessions from the other. Bridging this gap would not be easy.

Moreover, Mandela had no mandate even to take the first step. He should have approval from Oliver Tambo and the leadership in Lusaka, but he had neither the time nor the means to consult them, and he suspected that they – as well as his friends in the penthouse cell – would veto the notion anyway. He decided to proceed on his own and tell no one what he was doing. If it ended in humiliating public failure, his colleagues could disavow him as a crazy old man acting on his own. "There are times," Mandela once said, "when a leader must move out ahead of the flock [and] go off in a new direction, confident that he is leading his people the right way."

It was probably good that Mandela was supremely confident, although some would have called him delusional. In any event, his path would be even longer and harder than he thought. The two sides would spend nearly six years just talking about talking before the formal negotiations even began. There would be endless setbacks, impasses, and deadlocks; the talks would break off and resume, and it would take all of Mandela's optimism and resilience to keep the process going and bring it to a conclusion. As with the beginning, it would not have been possible without him.

Mandela wrote two more letters to Coetsee suggesting talks, but again got no replies. He found another way to send the message when a delegation from the British Commonwealth, trying to decide whether to impose sanctions on South Africa, asked to talk to him early in 1986. The government agreed, and even outfitted Mandela with a new tailored suit for the meeting. He told the group that he favored a negotiated settlement with the government, but he stressed that he didn't speak for the ANC and advised them to talk to Oliver Tambo in Lusaka. They did. They also visited Pretoria and came back to Cape Town in May for another meeting with Mandela. He was encouraged to have planted the seeds for talks both in Lusaka and Pretoria.

Then Botha launched air raids and commando attacks on ANC bases in Botswana, Zambia, and Zimbabwe. Any impetus for bargaining was shattered – and doubly so when Tambo and the ANC called on the people of South Africa to make the country ungovernable. Violence spread, and black townships were in a state of chaos. In June, the government declared a new State of Emergency.

Hardly the right conditions to begin negotiations, Mandela thought, but he reasoned that in times of crisis people tend to look for a way out. He asked to see General Willemse, the commissioner of prisons, then asked Willemse to see whether Coetsee would speak to him. This time, Coetsee told Willemse to bring Mandela around. In a three-hour chat at his official residence in Cape Town, Coetsee was direct, knowledgeable, and willing to listen. When Mandela asked to talk to President Botha, Coetsee said he would forward the request. But weeks turned into months, and there was no further word.

A breakthrough of sorts came in 1987. After several more talks with Coetsee, the justice minister said the government wanted to appoint a committee of senior officials to begin discussions with Mandela about starting negotiations – to talk about talks. Coetsee would be its chairman, and the members would be General Willemse; Fanie van den Merwe, director general of the prisons department; and [Niel Barnard](#), head of the National Intelligence Service. Mandela was uneasy talking to the country's chief spy, but he knew Barnard was Botha's protégé, so he agreed.

Now was the time to let his people in on his secret. Mandela began with his friends in the penthouse cell, whose reactions were split: Mhlaba and Mlangeni said negotiations were overdue, Sisulu said dubiously that he hoped Mandela knew what he was doing, and Kathrada was adamantly opposed. Mandela was in the process of writing to Oliver Tambo when he got a smuggled note from Tambo saying he had heard about the talks. What was Mandela doing? he wanted to know. Mandela replied that he was discussing a possible meeting of the government with the ANC's National Executive. Since he couldn't fully trust the messengers, he couldn't say more, except that he was convinced the time to talk had come, and he promised not to compromise the ANC. Mandela was also drafting a memo to the president laying out the ANC's position, and he would send a copy of that to Tambo, too, to reassure him.

The committee had its first meeting in May 1988 at an officers' club at the prison, and the four men met almost weekly for the first few months. Then the meetings became sporadic. Mandela spent the first few sessions educating the committee about the ANC, and found that all the members except Barnard, who had made a study of the organization, knew nothing about it beyond the stereotype created by their own propaganda. He corrected some of their misconceptions, and after that the talks focused on the issues that would haunt them for years: the armed struggle, the ANC's relationship with the Communist Party, the goal of majority political rule, and the fate of the white minority under a black government.

The question of violence preoccupied them for months. The government men insisted that the ANC must renounce armed resistance and stop its sabotage before there could be any formal negotiations. Violence was criminal behavior, they said, and no state could tolerate it.

Mandela replied that it was the government's violence that had dictated the method of the struggle. When the oppressor uses violence, he said, the oppressed have no alternative but to respond in kind in self-defense. If South Africa would renounce violence, he offered, the ANC would revert to peaceful resistance. His made his point, but that raised a practical objection: Since the government said it would never negotiate with a violent organization, how could it begin talks with the ANC without losing credibility? Mandela said he understood the problem, but it was theirs, not his. If they simply explained that there could be no peace without negotiating with the ANC, "People will understand."

The ANC's working alliance with the Communist Party was also a huge stumbling block. In the lingering spirit of the [Cold War](#), the National Party saw communism as the devil's work. The government men argued that the Communist Party controlled the ANC, and it was a precondition of bargaining that any link must be severed.

Mandela responded that the ANC would never abandon a loyal ally, but, in any case, the party and the ANC were separate and independent groups. They could work together for shared objectives, just as the World War II western Allies had fought alongside the Soviet Union, but their long-term goals were entirely different. The ANC was working to achieve democracy, not state socialism.

The government's conviction that communists ruled the ANC appeared to be based on a deeply held prejudice: Since the Communist Party members were mostly white or Indian, they must be controlling the inferior blacks. No one was convinced otherwise when Mandela cited dozens of cases where the ANC policy differed from the party's and the ANC stuck to its position. Exasperated, he pointed out that they all thought of themselves as smart, forceful, and persuasive. ". . . you cannot control me or get me to change my mind," he said. "What makes you think the communists can succeed where you have failed?" They laughed, but he suspected they never abandoned their prejudice.

There was little Mandela could do to persuade his counterparts that the rights of minorities would not be trampled if the government permitted majority rule. In effect, they were simply afraid that a black government would do to them what they had done to the blacks. Mandela referred them to the preamble of the Freedom Charter, which stated unequivocally, "South Africa belongs to all who live in it, black and white." The ANC had worked since its founding to bring together all people and all races of South Africa and had explicitly rejected the black Africanist policies of the PAC. Whites were Africans as well, Mandela said, and a future black government would need its white citizens. "We do not want to drive you into the sea," he said.

But the issue would remain alive throughout the negotiations.

7

“JUST A MAN AFTER ALL”

From Cairo Mandela signaled de Klerk, saying at a press conference that the ANC was "prepared to consider a cessation of hostilities." Eventually, the leadership agreed, they would have to call a ceasefire, in part to bring about formal negotiations and in part to give de Klerk a token victory to pacify his people. Mandela's statement was meant to encourage de Klerk to finish dismantling apartheid and continue with the talks.

In the intervals between Mandela's trips, the secret committee had continued to meet. But the peace process was severely threatened by the deadly internal fighting among South Africa's blacks. The great Zulu nation, centered in Natal province, was a separate force among the tribes, and its leader, Chief [Mangosuthu Buthelezi](#), had reconsidered his early support of the ANC. Though he still opposed apartheid and refused to allow the [KwaZulu](#) territory to become a Bantu homeland, he now opposed the armed struggle and criticized the Soweto uprising. He opposed international sanctions against South Africa and didn't even agree that the country should have a single government. And Buthelezi's militant wing, the [Inkatha Freedom Party](#), had essentially declared war on the ANC in Natal. Inkatha forces attacked and burned ANC villages, killing and wounding dozens and turning thousands of people into refugees. Mandela appealed for peace and tried to set up meetings with Buthelezi and the Zulu king, [Goodwill Zwelithini](#), but failed on all counts. The raids continued. In March of 1990 alone, 230 people died.

The talks, set to resume again in April, were derailed temporarily when police opened fire on an ANC demonstration, killing twelve. Mandela and de Klerk had private contacts, but Mandela decided that de Klerk was dragging his feet and had no intention of allowing black majority rule. de Klerk wanted to keep some kind of white veto, which Mandela called apartheid in disguise - a "loser-takes-all" system. But when the talks did open in May, they went surprisingly well, pledging both sides to formal negotiations, committing the government to end the State of Emergency, and laying the ground for a constitutional assembly and an interim government to rule South Africa until a truly democratic administration could be elected. It was a breathtaking agreement.

Perhaps inevitably, however, there were setbacks. In July, the police arrested some forty ANC members and accused them of being part of a Communist Party plot to overthrow the government. Violence in the country was rising, both from Inkatha raids and in the black townships. By July, the death toll for 1990 was more than 1,500, more than in all of 1989. The police and security forces were making few arrests. People in the townships said the authorities were actually fomenting violence, and Mandela suspected that was true.

The police seemed to be backing the Inkatha warriors. After they confiscated weapons in a village, Inkatha forces would raid the place the next day using the same weapons. One time, the ANC learned of a planned Inkatha attack in Sebokeng Township and passed the warning on to the minister of law and order, the commissioner of police, and the regional commissioners. On the specified day, police cars actually escorted busloads of Inkatha warriors to the massacre.

When Mandela confronted de Klerk about this and similar cases, the president promised to investigate, but nothing came of it. And when South African newspapers reported that the police had secretly funded Inkatha, Mandela began to doubt that de Klerk wanted the talks to succeed. Mandela warned publicly that a sinister "third force" was trying to sabotage the negotiations. The ANC had followed through on Mandela's promise and suspended its armed struggle; MK was no longer active. Now Mandela told a press conference that continuing violence might force a reversal of that policy. After Buthelezi twice reneged on agreements to stop the raids, the ANC ceased negotiations.

Two months later, however, Mandela - now elected ANC president to succeed the ailing Tambo - had second thoughts. He reasoned that the negotiations signaled that the government was weak and knew that apartheid must die and that talks were the only way to help de Klerk off his tiger. So Mandela went back to the table, and formal negotiations began in December 1991. The Convention for a Democratic South Africa, CODESA, called together eighteen delegations representing nearly every constituency in the country to hammer out a new constitution. Buthelezi boycotted the session, as did the PAC. But optimism ran high, and the first session ended after two days with a broad outline of the constitution the delegates meant to create.

Under fire from his own party, de Klerk gambled on a national referendum to endorse the idea of a new constitution. He won a huge majority, 60 percent of all white voters. But when the second round of the constitutional convention began in May 1992, there were still many hurdles. The most important was protecting the rights of the white minority: The government kept proposing ingenious ways to give whites a legal veto over a new black government's laws. The talks were deadlocked. Then another Inkatha raid killed forty-six people, most of them women and children, in a black township near Kimberley.

The government was clearly complicit in the massacre; the police took no action, and de Klerk said nothing about the atrocity. ANC members demanded a return to armed violence, and Mandela was tempted to agree. But again he decided that there was no alternative to bargaining, and he settled for a series of mass protests and a general strike to force the government to crack down on Inkatha. On September 7, 1992, an ANC protest march of 70,000 men and women in the eastern Cape district triggered another shooting by government troops. Twenty-nine marchers were killed and more than 200 were wounded.

That slaughter might have touched off a civil war. But Mandela and de Klerk took it as a new opening to resume the talks. Over the next three weeks, slow progress was made. On September 26, Mandela and de Klerk signed a new agreement that finally broke the deadlock. de Klerk accepted the principle of a single, elected assembly to adopt a new constitution and that would serve as an interim legislature pending elections. There was no mechanism for a white veto.

It was Joe Slovo, the ANC's old communist voice, who came up with the final compromise: There would be a five-year government of national unity in which all parties polling more than 5 percent in a general election would have

proportional representation. And after a final round of secret talks between the government and the ANC, the formula was adopted. After five years, the interim government would be replaced by a simple majority-rule administration.

And so it was. There were still a lot of loose ends to be tied up, and one by one they were: Buthelezi and the PAC were finally persuaded to take part in the process, an interim constitution was adopted, and the nation's first national, non-racial election was set for April 27, 1994. A new era had dawned in South Africa.

But as Mandela's political life fell together at last, his personal life was falling apart.

In February 1991, Winnie went on trial for kidnapping and killing [Stompie Moeketsi](#). Jerry Musivusi Richardson, her chief bodyguard, had already been convicted of the murder, and now he accused her of ordering the crime. Moeketsi's three friends, who had been kidnapped at the same time, said Winnie took part in the beatings. The judge ruled that Winnie's testimony was "vague, evasive, equivocal, inconsistent, unconvincing, and brazenly untruthful." She was convicted of Moeketsi's kidnapping and being an accessory to the killing and sentenced to six years in prison. Though the sentence was reduced to a fine on appeal, Mandela continued to defend her, insisting that the charges were just part of the government's "campaign to discredit my wife." As he wrote in *Long Walk to Freedom*, "As far as I was concerned, verdict or no verdict, her innocence was not in doubt."

The next year, however, Winnie was accused of ordering the murder of the doctor who had been called in to treat the beaten boys. Charges were not pressed.

With Winnie accused of the doctor's murder, she was also under fire from the ANC for the disappearance of 400,000 rand from funds she controlled in the social welfare department. And new evidence was emerging that she had been unfaithful to Mandela. The *Johannesburg Sunday Times* printed a letter Winnie had written to her much younger lawyer and deputy in the social welfare office, Dali Mpofu, accusing him of two-timing her and berating him for not taking the ANC scandal seriously.

In spite of this, Winnie kept a loyal following who called her "mother of the nation." In 1993, to the dismay of other ANC leaders, she was elected head of the ANC Women's League, and she would be re-elected in 1997.

But the Mandela marriage was over. Announcing their separation, Mandela praised Winnie's fortitude and dedication to the cause while he was in prison and she was being hounded by the authorities. "My love for her remains undiminished," he declared, but "tensions" and "differences" between them made a separation best for both.

Summing up the relationship in *Long Walk to Freedom*, Mandela said, "Perhaps I was blinded to certain things" by his pain and guilt at having sacrificed much of his role as husband and father to serve the cause. But Winnie's life had been harder than his, he wrote: "She married a man who soon left her; that man became a myth; then that myth returned home and proved to be just a man after all." His children, he added, complained that he was not their father, but the father of the nation. "To be the father of a nation is a great honor," Mandela said, "but to be the father of a family is a greater joy. But it is a joy I had far too little of."

Another blow came when Oliver Tambo, Mandela's one-time law partner and long-time comrade in the struggle, died of a stroke in 1993. His death left Mandela feeling "like the loneliest man in the world." Though his captivity had kept the two men apart for many years, "I kept up a life-long conversation with him in my head," and it hurt Mandela that Tambo had not lived to cast his vote in a free South Africa.

Mandela was grateful, however, for the pleasant parts of his life. He built a house in Qunu, his boyhood home in the Transkei. It was a duplicate of the cottage he lived in at [Victor Verster](#) prison – a fact some people found disconcerting, but he had enjoyed the cottage and was familiar with its layout; in his new house he would not have to grope to find the kitchen in the dark. He also revisited Robben Island to persuade the young MK firebrands still held there to accept the government's offer of amnesty. He talked them into it.

His sweetest gift, however, was the Nobel Peace Prize he was awarded in 1993. If he had thought about the prize at all, he would never have presumed it would be given to the founder of the ANC's militant MK wing. But now he and de Klerk received the award together, following the previous South African winners, Chief Albert Luthuli and Archbishop Tutu. The award was a tribute to all who had fought for South Africa's freedom, Mandela wrote, and "I would accept it on their behalf."

Although he had come to regret calling de Klerk a man of integrity and had harshly criticized his deviousness during the long talks, he used his Nobel speech to acknowledge that de Klerk had made a vital contribution to the peace process. That was true, he said, but there was also a pragmatic reason not to undermine de Klerk: His enemy was now his partner in making peace, and the weaker he made de Klerk, the less peacemaking power he would have.

The ANC didn't begin its election campaign until February 1994, just two months before the scheduled vote. The candidates had to reach out to 20 million voters, many of them illiterate and going to the polls for the first time. The ANC held country-wide community gatherings to teach the voting process and to sound out the people on what they wanted done by their new government. The leaders put together a 150-page platform promising development and reconstruction and distilled it into a campaign manifesto called "A Better Life for All."

Mandela repeatedly warned black voters that life would not change overnight; patience and hard work would be needed. "We cannot do it all for you," he said. "You must do it yourselves." To the whites, his message was just as simple: This was their land, too. They must not focus on the past but help make a better future for everyone.

After a final spasm of violence, with fifteen ANC election workers hacked to death in Natal and fifty-three dead in an Inkatha eruption in Johannesburg, Buthelezi finally agreed that Zulus could vote in the election. Afrikaner holdouts also

came under the tent. Mandela and de Klerk, rivals for the title of president in the national unity government, held a debate. After they had attacked each other, Mandela struck a conciliatory note, telling de Klerk, "Sir, you are one of those I rely upon." Taking de Klerk's hand, he concluded, "We are going to face the problems of this country together. I am proud to hold your hand for us to go forward." De Klerk, he said, seemed surprised, but pleased.

When the polls had closed, the results showed the ANC won 62.6 percent of the national vote and the same supermajority in the new 400-seat National Assembly. Nelson Mandela was inaugurated as the country's new president, with F.W. de Klerk as his first deputy and Thabo Mbeki as second deputy president. Mandela spoke: "We have at last achieved our political emancipation. We pledge ourselves to liberate all our people." That meant whites as well as blacks; the oppressor must be liberated just as surely as the oppressed. "Never, never and never again shall it be that this beautiful land will again experience the oppression of one by another . . . God bless Africa!"

South Africans had won the freedom to be free. Now they would have to live it.

When Mandela took office, South Africa was in deep trouble. A third of its 40 million people were illiterate, and half of them lived below the poverty line. Twenty-three million lacked adequate electricity or sanitation, 33 percent were unemployed, and 2 million children didn't attend school. The ANC platform had promised an ambitious \$11 billion program of development and reconstruction to help solve these problems, but there was no money for it; the debts run up by the Nationalist government were eating up 20 percent of the national budget in interest payments alone.

For any other nation, those ills would add up to a top-priority crisis. In South Africa, however, Mandela saw his primary job as reconciling the races. Whites were leaving the country in fear of their fate under black rule, while radical blacks were pressing for policies like that of neighboring Zimbabwe (formerly Rhodesia), where white farmers were having their property seized and white officials were being frozen out by President [Robert Mugabe's](#) government.

To reassure South Africa's whites that they were needed and welcome in a new "rainbow nation," Mandela made sure there was a broad coalition in his cabinet. Besides de Klerk, National Party officials became ministers for agriculture, energy, environment, and minerals and energy. Other cabinet positions were taken by ANC members, many of whom – like [Joe Modise](#), Alfred Nzo, Joe Slovo, Mac Maharaj, and [Dullah Omar](#) – had long been comrades. And despite her growing notoriety, Winnie – who had taken the surname Madikizela-Mandela – had been elected to Parliament, and Mandela gave her a job as deputy minister of arts, culture, science, and technology. (That didn't work out; she was fired eleven months later after accusations of corruption.)

Mandela's relations with de Klerk became increasingly strained. He thought the former president was being needlessly provocative, while de Klerk felt constantly humiliated by Mandela's criticism. But Mandela took pains to court senior members of the Nationalist regime, including the widow of the assassinated Hendrik Verwoerd, emphasizing personal forgiveness and reconciliation. He announced that "courageous people do not fear forgiving for the sake of peace."

As a powerful symbolic gesture, Mandela exhorted black South Africans to root for the mostly Afrikaner national rugby team they had always detested, the [Springboks](#). South Africa was hosting the 1995 Rugby World Cup, and when the Springboks won a classically hard-fought final over New Zealand, Mandela presented the trophy to the team's captain, [Francois Pienaar](#), an Afrikaner, wearing a Springboks shirt with Pienaar's number on the back. As de Klerk himself acknowledged, "Mandela won the hearts of millions of white rugby fans" with that gesture, and South Africa's blacks now cheered alongside the whites.

But perhaps the most powerful and lasting force for peace between the races was Archbishop Tutu's [Truth and Reconciliation Commission](#), which Mandela set up to investigate crimes committed in the apartheid era – not only by the government, but by the ANC and fellow rebels as well. Its controversial goal was to clear the national air by exposing the dirty linen on all sides and to ensure no hidden atrocities would explode in the future. To encourage full exposure, the commission granted amnesty to witnesses willing to testify to what they and others had done.

At one hearing, witnesses testified that Winnie had paid the equivalent of \$8,000 for the killing of the doctor who treated Stompie Moeketsi and his three friends and provided the gun that was used. The commission's final report concluded that she was directly responsible for the assault, abduction, torture, and murder of several men, women, and children. It also stated that she was "politically and morally responsible for the gross violations of human rights" committed by her bodyguards. When Tutu urged her to apologize and admit her mistakes, she said only that "things went horribly wrong."

Tutu held two years of hearings exposing the details of rapes, torture, bombings, and assassinations, and his conclusions about Winnie Madikizela-Mandela were typical of the commission's findings: considered, impartial, and persuasive.

And as he had done throughout the negotiation process, Mandela set the tone for reconciliation by refusing to show any hint of bitterness at the long history of mistreatment of his people. While he would privately concede that his own memories of slights, slurs, and official persecution still rankled, he never betrayed that fact in public – people came to believe that he was a kind of saint and tried to emulate him. The illusion became a powerful force in keeping racial peace.

To handle South Africa's other domestic problems while he pursued reconciliation, Mandela relied heavily on Thabo Mbeki –not his first choice for deputy president, but a good one. Since a major job program had to be abandoned for lack of money, along with some nationalization of industry that Mandela had pushed for, they turned to a liberal taxation and economic policy designed to lure foreign investment and create jobs.

Despite the shortage of funds, welfare spending increased by 13 percent in each of the government's first two years.

Grants, including child maintenance, disability, and old-age pensions - which had previously been set at different levels for South Africa's different racial groups - were now equal for all. Free healthcare was introduced for pregnant women and children under six.

By the 1999 election, the ANC could boast that 3 million people had acquired telephones, 1.5 million children had been brought into the education system, 500 clinics had been built or upgraded, 2 million people had been wired for electricity, and 750,000 homes had been built, housing nearly 3 million people.

De Klerk's government had eradicated apartheid for the most part, but now many of its negative consequences could be redressed. People who had lost their land to white confiscation, for instance, were given the means to get it back, and a new labor relations law provided for collective bargaining, the end of race-based discrimination, and affirmative action in hiring and promotion.

Not everything was a success under Mandela. South Africa's notorious crime rate was practically untouched, a key reason 750,000 whites left the country (out of a total white population of 5 million). Mandela later admitted that he hadn't paid enough attention to the exploding epidemic of HIV/AIDS, and by 1999, 10 percent of the nation's population was HIV-positive.

Mandela's foreign-affairs record was mixed. He was loyal to countries and heads of state who had backed the ANC's fight; consequently, he overlooked human-rights abuses by China, Indonesia's [Suharto](#), [Muammar Qaddafi](#) of Libya, and Cuba's [Fidel Castro](#). He took a special interest in affairs on the African continent, but was ambivalent toward authoritarian regimes in Lesotho, Nigeria, and Zaire.

Nonetheless, Mandela remained respected in the world and beloved at home. He lived modestly; he allowed de Klerk to remain in the presidential residence while he settled into a more modest home nearby, and he donated a third of his presidential salary to his foundation, the [Nelson Mandela Children's Fund](#). He was known for wearing his trademark batik shirts, known as "Madiba shirts," even on formal occasions.

Winnie tried to persuade him to reconcile, but Mandela started formal divorce proceedings in 1995. By then, he had begun the final romance of his life, a heartfelt devotion to [Graca Machel](#), the widow of President [Somora Machel](#) of neighboring Mozambique. They met in 1990, soon after her first husband died in a plane crash, but during his presidency their friendship developed into a partnership, and she joined him on several foreign trips. A multitasking woman who rose from rural poverty to be a teacher and then a revolutionary in Machel's [Frelimo](#) rebel group, she became minister of education and culture in his first cabinet and married him soon after. A gracious and cultured woman, she became known for her humanitarian work with refugee children after his death. She turned down Mandela's first proposal, wanting to retain her independence and spend time in Mozambique, but they married on his eightieth birthday in July 1998.

Mandela never planned to run for a second term, and he gave his farewell speech on March 29, 1999, when the government of national unity yielded to a normal democracy. He was succeeded by Thabo Mbeki, who labored under the handicap of not being Nelson Mandela. But Mbeki managed a creditable eight years in office before turning over the presidency to [Jacob Zuma](#) in 2008.

In retirement, Mandela declared that he wanted a quiet family life, split between his homes in Qunu and Johannesburg. But he soon grew restless. After abandoning an effort to write another volume of memoirs, *The Presidential Years*, he retired from retirement and again took up a busy public life. His daily schedule included meetings with world leaders and celebrities and working with his Nelson Mandela Foundation on school construction and rural development issues. He was especially active in fighting HIV/AIDS, the pandemic he had neglected while in office. He described it as "a war" that had killed more than "all previous wars," and he urged Mbeki to make sure that HIV-positive South Africans had access to retroviral drugs. He was a featured speaker at international AIDS conferences in 2000 and 2004. He spoke out on other world affairs and denounced both the 1999 NATO intervention in [Kosovo](#) and the U.S. war in [Iraq](#) in 2003 and accused the United States of having committed more "unspeakable atrocities" than any other nation, beginning with the atomic bombing of [Japan](#) in 1945.

But in 2004, in failing health at eighty-five, Mandela announced that he was again withdrawing from public life. He traveled rarely after that, but spoke out on some issues, including urging Zimbabwe's President Mugabe to step down. (Mugabe hasn't.) With Graca Machel and Desmond Tutu, Mandela organized [The Elders](#), a group of former world leaders who contribute their wisdom and experience to help solve intractable world problems. Currently headed by former United Nations Secretary General [Kofi Annan](#), the members include Tutu, Machel, [Jimmy Carter](#), [Mary Robinson](#) of Ireland, [Ernesto Zedillo](#) of Mexico, and [Gro Harlem Brundtland](#) of The Netherlands.

Mandela was hospitalized for a lung infection in March and again in June 2013. In following weeks, he was reported to be in critical condition, on life support, and even in a vegetative state; his family was said to be debating turning off the life-support machines. President Zuma then said he was in critical but stable condition and was responding to treatment. Graca Machel, who had been at his bedside almost continually, gave a reassuring interview, saying that her husband was only occasionally in pain, and she was no longer as worried about him. After almost three months in the hospital, Mandela was sent home, where Zuma said in September that he was responding to treatment.

At ninety-five, he was near the end of his road - and his tranquility was threatened by a series of unseemly legal quarrels among his children and grandchildren. Some of these involved money being held in family trusts for the benefit of his descendants; others challenge his relatives' use of the Mandela name to sell products, such as wine and clothing. Another, which erupted just as he was hospitalized for his lung infection, concerned the burial place of his dead children (his sons Madiba and Makgatho and his first daughter Makaziwe) and the eventual gravesite of Mandela himself. Appealing to the family to end their disputes, Desmond Tutu said their behavior was "almost like spitting in

Madiba's face."

On December 5, Nelson Mandela died surrounded by his family. His passing was announced by President Zuma, who said, "Our nation has lost its greatest son." According to his wishes, he was buried, alongside his children, in the village of Qunu, where he grew up.

Mandela's legacy is secure. He fought the good fight, kept his integrity, achieved the impossible, fended off a civil war, and fathered a nation. Nelson Mandela will forever be revered as one of the great leaders of all time.

GALLERY



A young Nelson Mandela and other village boys played on South Africa's veld.



As a young man in working in the black Johannesburg township of Soweto, Mandela found lodging in a dirt-floored, tin-roofed shack.



Mandela spent eight weeks in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, receiving training in hand-to-hand combat, small arms, explosives, demolition, command, and guerrilla warfare.



On trial for inciting workers to strike and traveling without documents, Mandela defended himself in part by arguing that he was not bound to obey laws passed by a Parliament that did not represent him.



Mandela served as a political prisoner on Robben Island for eighteen of the twenty-seven years he spent behind bars. In this aerial view, flat-topped [Table Mountain](#) can be seen in the distance.



Mandela and South Africa's other political prisoners passed beneath this sign.



The prison at Robben Island now serves as a [museum](#).



Mandela was imprisoned in this cellblock.



The Republic of South Africa adopted its new [flag](#) on April 27, 1994, to replace the one that had been in use since 1928. The banner, designed by Frederick Brownell, was chosen to represent the country's emerging democracy.



Statues of Albert Luthuli, Desmond Tutu, F.W. de Klerk, and Nelson Mandela stand on the Cape Town waterfront.



A statue of Mandela by South African sculptor Kobus Hattingh stands in Nelson Mandela Square in Johannesburg.



This [statue](#) of Nelson Mandela by the English sculptor [Ian Homer Walters](#) stands in London's Parliament Square.



The 50,000-seat Nelson Mandela Bay Stadium is located in Port Elizabeth, South Africa.



On February 11, 2012, South African President Jacob Zuma announced the country would issue banknotes bearing the image of Nelson Mandela. The bills went into circulation on November 6, 2012.

QUOTATIONS

"Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world."

"When a man is denied the right to live the life he believes in, he has no choice but to become an outlaw."

"I learned that courage was not the absence of fear, but the triumph over it. The brave man is not he who does not feel afraid, but he who conquers that fear."

"I am fundamentally an optimist. Whether that comes from nature or nurture, I cannot say. Part of being optimistic is keeping one's head pointed toward the sun, one's feet moving forward. There were many dark moments when my faith in humanity was sorely tested, but I would not and could not give myself up to despair. That way lays defeat and death."

"A good head and good heart are always a formidable combination. But when you add to that a literate tongue or pen, then you have something very special."

"It always seems impossible until it's done."

"For to be free is not merely to cast off one's chains, but to live in a way that respects and enhances the freedom of others."

"Resentment is like drinking poison and then hoping it will kill your enemies."

"There is nothing like returning to a place that remains unchanged to find the ways in which you yourself have altered."

"No one is born hating another person because of the color of his skin, or his background, or his religion. People must learn to hate, and if they can learn to hate, they can be taught to love, for love comes more naturally to the human heart than its opposite."

"Lead from the back - and let others believe they are in front."

I have walked that long road to freedom. I have tried not to falter; I have made missteps along the way. But I have discovered the secret that after climbing a great hill, one only finds that there are many more hills to climb. I have taken a moment here to rest, to steal a view of the glorious vista that surrounds me, to look back on the distance I have come. But I can only rest for a moment, for with freedom come responsibilities, and I dare not linger, for my long walk is not ended."

"I am not a saint, unless you think of a saint as a sinner who keeps on trying."

"The greatest glory in living lies not in never falling, but in rising every time we fall."

"There is no passion to be found playing small - in settling for a life that is less than the one you are capable of living."

"Do not judge me by my successes, judge me by how many times I fell down and got back up again."

"If you talk to a man in a language he understands, that goes to his head. If you talk to him in his language, that goes to his heart."

"As I walked out the door toward the gate that would lead to my freedom, I knew if I didn't leave my bitterness and hatred behind, I'd still be in prison."

"As I have said, the first thing is to be honest with yourself. You can never have an impact on society if you have not changed yourself. . . Great peacemakers are all people of integrity, of honesty, but humility."

"Where you stand depends on where you sit."

"I am the captain of my soul."

"One of the things I learned when I was negotiating was that until I changed myself, I could not change others."

"As we let our own light shine, we unconsciously give other people permission to do the same."

"Overcoming poverty is not a task of charity, it is an act of justice. Like Slavery and Apartheid, poverty is not natural. It is man-made and it can be overcome and eradicated by the actions of human beings. Sometimes it falls on a generation to be great. You can be that great generation. Let your greatness blossom."

It is said that no one truly knows a nation until one has been inside its jails. A nation should not be judged by how it treats its highest citizens, but its lowest ones."

"A leader . . . is like a shepherd. He stays behind the flock, letting the most nimble go out ahead, whereupon the others follow, not realizing that all along they are being directed from behind."

"Courage is not the absence of fear - it's inspiring others to move beyond it."

"Appearances matter - and remember to smile."

"We ask ourselves, who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, handsome, talented and fabulous? Actually, who are you not to be?"

"After climbing a great hill, one only finds that there are many more hills to climb."

"A winner is a dreamer who never gives up."

"During my lifetime I have dedicated myself to this struggle of the African people. I have fought against white domination, and I have fought against black domination. I have cherished the ideal of a democratic and free society in which all persons live together in harmony and with equal opportunities. It is an ideal which I hope to live for and to achieve. But if needs be, it is an ideal for which I am prepared to die."

"In my country we go to prison first and then become president."

"Nothing is black or white."

"You will achieve more in this world through acts of mercy than you will through acts of retribution."

"One cannot be prepared for something while secretly believing it will not happen."

"Freedom is indivisible; the chains on any one of my people were the chains on all of them, the chains on all of my people were the chains on me."

"There can be no keener revelation of a society's soul than the way in which it treats its children."

"I had no epiphany, no singular revelation, no moment of truth, but a steady accumulation of a thousand slights, a thousand indignities and a thousand unremembered moments produced in me an anger, a rebelliousness, a desire to fight the system that imprisoned my people. There was no particular day on which I said, Henceforth I will devote myself to the liberation of my people; instead, I simply found myself doing so, and could not do otherwise."

"Know your enemy - and learn about his favorite sport."

"There is no easy walk to freedom anywhere, and many of us will have to pass through the valley of the shadow of death again and again before we reach the mountaintop of our desires."

"Let there be justice for all. Let there be peace for all. Let there be work, bread, water and salt for all. Let each know that for each the body, the mind and the soul have been freed to fulfill themselves."

"Quitting is leading too."

"It is not where you start but how high you aim that matters for success."

"When the water starts boiling it is foolish to turn off the heat."

"We must use time creatively, and forever realize that the time is always ripe to do right."

"The brave man is not the one who has no fears, he is the one who triumphs over his fears."

"It is what we make out of what we have, not what we are given, that separates one person from another."

"Without language, one cannot talk to people and understand them; one cannot share their hopes and aspirations, grasp their history, appreciate their poetry, or savor their songs."

"And as we let our own light shine, we unconsciously give other people permission to do the same. As we are liberated from our own fear, our presence automatically liberates others."

"I am not an optimist, but a great believer of hope."

"I have never cared very much for personal prizes. A person does not become a freedom fighter in the hope of winning awards."

"It is better to lead from behind and to put others in front, especially when you celebrate victory when nice things occur. You take the front line when there is danger. Then people will appreciate your leadership."

"We owe our children – the most vulnerable citizens in any society – a life free from violence and fear."

"A good head and a good heart are always a formidable combination."

"If you want to make peace with your enemy, you have to work with your enemy. Then he becomes your partner."

"There is a universal respect and even admiration for those who are humble and simple by nature, and who have absolute confidence in all human beings irrespective of their social status."

"Live life as though nobody is watching, and express yourself as though everyone is listening."

"Peace is the greatest weapon for development that any person can have."

"I love playing and chatting with children . . . feeding and putting them to bed with a little story, and being away from the family has troubled me throughout my . . . life. I like relaxing at the house, reading quietly, taking in the sweet smell that comes from the pots, sitting around a table with the family and taking out my wife and children. When you can no longer enjoy these simple pleasures something valuable is taken away from your life and you feel it in your daily

work.”

“No single person can liberate a country. You can only liberate a country if you act as a collective.”

“Only free men can negotiate.”

“Once a person is determined to help themselves, there is nothing that can stop them.”

“Your playing small does not serve the world. There’s nothing enlightened about shrinking so that other people won’t feel insecure around you.”

“People must learn to hate, and if they can learn to hate, they can be taught to love, for love comes more naturally to the human heart than its opposite . . . Man’s goodness is a flame that can be hidden but never explained.”

“The brave man is not he who does not feel afraid, but he who conquers that fear.”

“I could not imagine that the future I was walking toward could compare in any way to the past that I was leaving behind.”

“There are few misfortunes in this world that you cannot turn into a personal triumph if you have the iron will and the necessary skill.”

“Success in politics demands that you must take your people into confidence about your views and state them very clearly, very politely, very calmly, but nevertheless, state them openly.”

“What counts in life is not the mere fact that we have lived. It is what difference we have made to the lives of others that will determine the significance of the life we lead.”

“Money won’t create success, the freedom to make it will.”

“We must use time wisely and forever realize that the time is always ripe to do right.”

“We forgive but have not forgotten.”

“I shall stick to our vow: never, never under any circumstances, to say anything unbecoming of the other . . . The trouble, of course, is that most successful men are prone to some form of vanity. There comes a stage in their lives when they consider it permissible to be egotistic and to brag to the public at large about their unique achievements.”

“It is most unusual to return to a place that has changed in ways you yourself have altered.”

“Education is the most powerful weapon we can use to change the world.”

“A freedom fighter learns the hard way that it is the oppressor who defines the nature of the struggle, and the oppressed is often left no recourse but to use methods that mirror those of the oppressor.”

“No one is born hating another person because of the color of his skin, or his background, or his religion. People must learn to hate, and if they can learn to hate, they can be taught to love, for love comes more naturally to the human heart than its opposite.”

Having resentment against someone is like drinking poison and thinking it will kill your enemy.”

“After climbing a great hill I realized that there are many more hills to climb.”

“There is no such thing as part freedom.”

“In some ways, it is easier to be a dissident, for then one is without responsibility.”

“I always knew that deep down in every human heart, there is mercy and generosity. No one is born hating another person because of the color of his skin, or his background, or his religion. People must learn to hate, and if they can learn to hate, they can be taught to love, for love comes more naturally to the human heart than the opposite.”

TIMELINE

1918 – Nelson Mandela is born at Mvezo in the Transkei.

1925 – Mandela attends primary school near Qunu and receives the name Nelson from a teacher.

1927 – Mandela's father, Gadla Henry Mphakanyiswa, dies.

1930 – Mandela is entrusted to the care of Thembu Regent Jongintaba Dalindyebo.

1934 – Mandela enrolls at the Clarkebury Boarding Institute in Engcobo.

1937 – Mandela attends Healdtown, the Wesleyan College at Fort Beaufort.

1939 – Mandela enrolls at the University College of Fort Hare in Alice, hoping to achieve a Bachelor of Arts degree in order to become a translator in South Africa's Native Affairs office.

1940 – Mandela is expelled from the college after resigning from the Student Representative Council.

1941 – Mandela flees to Johannesburg to escape an arranged marriage and becomes a night watchman.

1941 – Mandela meets Walter Sisulu, who helps him get a job at the law firm of Witkin, Sidelsky & Eidelman.

1942 – Mandela completes his Bachelor of Arts degree through correspondence courses with the University of South Africa.

1942 – Mandela begins to attend African National Congress meetings.

1943 – Mandela returns to Fort Hare for graduation ceremonies and begins to study law at Witwatersrand University.

1943 – Mandela joins ANC member Gaur Radebe in a successful bus boycott.

1944 – Mandela marries Evelyn Mase.

1946 – Mandela and Evelyn move to Soweto.

1946 – Mandela's first child, a son named Madiba "Thembi" Thembekile, is born in February.

1947 – Mandela leaves Sidelsky and Eidelman and becomes a full-time student and political activist.

1947 – Mandela's daughter Makaziwe is born. She lives only nine months.

1948 – Mandela is elected secretary of the ANCYL.

1951 – Mandela is elected president of the ANCYL and receives his driver's license.

1952 – Mandela is arrested and charged with violating the Suppression of Communism Act.

1952 – Mandela is elected Transvaal ANC president.

1952 – Mandela and nineteen others are convicted under the Suppression of Communism Act and sentenced to nine months of hard labor. The sentence is suspended for two years.

1952 – Mandela is elected deputy president of the ANC.

1952 – The government bans Mandela from attending meetings of all kinds.

1952 – Mandela and Oliver Tambo open South Africa's first black law firm in downtown Johannesburg.

1953 – Mandela is reprimanded by the ANC National Executive Committee for calling for the end of non-violent resistance.

1953 – Mandela is banned again under an order of the Suppression of Communism Act and ordered to resign from the ANC. He is prohibited from attending any meetings or gatherings for two years.

1954 – The Law Society of the Transvaal attempts to have Mandela removed from the roll of accredited attorneys for unprofessional and dishonorable conduct based on his prior conviction in the defiance case. Mandela is vindicated and is permitted to continue to practice law.

1954 – The Council of the Congress of the People is created to represent all people of South Africa and writes the Freedom Charter.

1955 – The Freedom Charter is adopted.

1956 – Mandela receives his third ban, restricting him to Johannesburg.

1956 – Mandela is arrested. He and 155 others are charged with treason.

1957 – Winnie Mandela is arrested for protesting the states "reference book," which required black women to carry passbooks.

1958 – Mandela divorces his first wife Evelyn and marries Winnie Madikizela.

1958 – Mandela and Winnie have a daughter, Zenani.

1959 – Mandela and thirty remaining defendants are arraigned for treason. They plead not guilty.

1960 – Police kill sixty-nine protestors and injure 181 in the South African township of Sharpeville.

1960 – South Africa declares a state of emergency and detains thousands of blacks, including Mandela.

1960 – South Africa bans the ANC.

1960 – The State of Emergency ends.

1960 – Mandela is released from prison and returns home.

1960 – Mandela and Winnie's second daughter, Zindziswa, is born.

1961 – Mandela and twenty-nine others are acquitted of treason charges.

1961 – Mandela goes underground.

1961 – The ANC officially abandons its non-violence stance.

1962 – Mandela leaves South Africa to obtain military training and garner support for the ANC.

1962 – Mandela returns to South Africa.

1962 – South African police arrest Mandela.

1962 – Mandela is sentenced to five years in prison - three for inciting people to strike and two for leaving the country without a passport.

1963 – The General Law Amendment Act, better known as the Ninety Day Detention Law, is enacted by the government. It permits the police to detain any person on grounds of suspicion of a political crime without a warrant.

1963 – Mandela arrives at the prison on Robben Island.

1963 – Mandela appears in court for the first time in what becomes known as the Rivonia Trial and pleads not guilty to sabotage.

1964 – Mandela and most of his co-defendants are convicted and sentenced to life imprisonment.

1964 – Mandela arrives on Robben Island.

1982 – Mandela is transferred from Robben Island to Pollsmoor Prison.

1985 – Through his daughter Zindzi, Mandela rejects South African President P.W. Botha's offer to release him from prison if he renounces violence.

1988 – Mandela is diagnosed with tuberculosis.

1989 – Mandela meets with Botha.

1989 – Botha resigns, and F.W. de Klerk replaces him as president.

1989 – Mandela meets with de Klerk.

1990 – The South African government lifts its ban of the ANC, the PAC, and thirty-one other outlawed organizations.

1990 – De Klerk suspends capital punishment and announces that all political prisoners jailed for non-violent acts will be freed.

1990 – Mandela is released from prison.

1990 – Mandela is elected deputy president of the ANC.

1991 – Winnie is tried for the kidnapping and murder of Stompie Moeketsi and, found guilty, receives a six-year sentence, but negotiates her sentence down a fine.

1991 – Negotiations between the ANC and the government begin.

1991 – The Convention for a Democratic South Africa, CODESA, calls together eighteen delegations to write a new constitution.

1992 – President de Klerk agrees to accept a single, elected assembly to adopt a new constitution that will act as an interim legislature pending elections. South Africa's first free election is set for April 27, 1994.

1993 – Mandela and de Klerk are awarded the Nobel Peace Prize.

1994 – The ANC begins its election campaign.

1994 – Mandela votes for the first time.

1994 – Mandela is elected the first president of democratic South Africa.

1994 – Mandela is inaugurated as president of the Republic of South Africa.

1994 – Mandela's autobiography, *Long Walk to Freedom*, is published.

1996 – Mandela divorces Winnie.

1998 – On his eightieth birthday, Mandela marries Graca Machel.

1999 – Mandela steps down after one term as president and establishes the Nelson Mandela Foundation.

2004 – Mandela announces he is stepping down from public life.

2008 – Mandela turns ninety.

2009 – Mandela attends the inauguration of President Jacob Zuma.

2010 – Mandela's second book, *Conversations with Myself*, is published.

2011 – Mandela's third book, *Nelson Mandela by Himself: The Authorized Book of Quotations*, is published.

2013 – Mandela is admitted to the hospital.

2013 – Mandela spends his ninety-fifth birthday in the hospital.

2013 – A film based on Mandela's autobiography, *Long Walk to Freedom*, debuts.

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Published by New Word City Inc., 2014
www.NewWordCity.com

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ISBN 978-1-61230-749-7